764 hurried us toward the river and had quite got away from us as we came to the principal shrine of the village at the head of the path. As we started down the hill to the river an elder of Gankwe stopped us with an imperative, "You must not go."

Very loud and very fast the drums now sounded—it was
776 the rhythm to Kediampo, the Sky God—and a moment later the grave diggers appeared. They came not by the usual way and not under the spiritual guard, but along an overgrown side path. There were ten or twelve men, five of them muddied from their labors, carrying drums and cutlasses, the others, villagers who had awaited them. The men who had been digging wore green parrot's feathers in their hair, and they walked briskly and silently in single file to the house of mourning. There was a great stillness along the path of the diggers. The children had disappeared and the women sought shelter in their own doorways. Stools were not offered us—there was serious business at hand.

All the men in the village had gathered here; they stood in a semicircle about the front of the open shelter. The old woman slowly arose and, taking a small strip of white cloth, passed it once along each side of the coffin and once over the back as though she were ceremonially cleansing it. Four of the earth-stained young men now took up the coffin, lifting it from the bier and placing it on the ground in front of the house, raising and lowering it three times before it was finally set down. A fifth brought out two pads of green leaves, and two of the bearers put these on their
764 heads. The questioning was about to begin.

As they raised the coffin with the putrifying body within
787 it on their heads, their muscles stiffened. With eyes half glazed, and expressionless faces, they seemed there but to do the bidding of the spirit of the dead man whose body they supported. They swayed forward and back, from side to side, without moving their feet, and the coffin swayed with their swaying. And then they began to advance, slowly at first, but after a few steps briskly, to a

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group of three elders who stood to the left of the death house. Three times they advanced, and three times retreated, and each time as they reached the three men, one of the elders would put up his hand, touch the end of the wooden box, and the bearers would retreat.

Sedefo took his place with the three and asked a question. The coffin advanced, retreated. Sedefo spoke again; what he said we could not hear, for his voice was so low that it reached us as a murmur. The response to the second question was disquieting; the men retreated without moving toward the questioner, step by step they moved slowly backward in a circle before us, and then, without any hesitation, they started on a run into the village along the path to our left. Two of the grave diggers followed them, for when the dead speaks, his replies to the questions asked him must be interpreted and attested.

Serious consequences may follow the expression of fact exposed by the dead. Repeated visits to a given house will point the finger of suspicion to the one who lives there, and a heavy fine at best, or expulsion from the village to certain death in the unprotecting bush at the worst, may be his fate. Supernatural forces are beyond control; here some man's destiny was being sealed by the automatic movements of two others under the hypnotizing influence of the spirit of the dead. Back came the coffin and the questioning was resumed. This time the man who took up the inquiry stood upwind, and we could hear his low voice.

"Did a white man slay you?" he asked. We watched anxiously. What if the answer should be that our coming to the bush had brought death in its train? But the bearers retreated when they came where the questioner was standing.

"Did someone at Gansee slay you?" Again the advance, and the backward steps to the mourning place.

"Did someone at Gandya village slay you?" The answer was "No."

"Did someone at Gankwe slay you?" And with the question, the corpse and its bearers once more disappeared from sight into the village, the women fleeing before it and

764 herding the children before them so that they would be
787 upwind from the coffin and the stench of decaying flesh.

As they returned the rear bearer was relieved; the tension eased for a moment, but there was one man who did not smile. And it was whispered that he lived in the part of the village where the corpse invariably went. The scene changed slightly; Sedefo, who had stopped questioning, resumed his efforts, and five, ten, fifteen times the bearers advanced toward him and retreated from where he stood. Sometimes we caught our breath; the corpse was coming toward us; but always the bearers swerved before they reached us, going no farther than the grove of thorn palms that grew near the house of death. Then once more they broke through the ranks of questioners and, followed by the watchers, were off in the direction of the village council house and the dwelling of the chief.

The bearer who had been relieved came forward; the corpse, he said, wanted to speak; he must be allowed to carry the body again. This time there was little relief while the change was being made, for the man was possessed, and [158] the air vibrated with the intensity of the spirit which animated him. But apparently there were still difficulties. Again and again the questions were asked, again and again the bearers advanced, retreated. Sedefo kept insisting "Yu *mu* taki. You *must* speak!" and again the coffin advanced, retreated, and then once more went to our left into the village.

Clouds were rising to windward; the sun was low on the horizon. The bearers returned, advanced to the village head once, twice, again, and again, and then the coffin was placed on the ground, raised three times, and left there for a moment before others took it into the house and replaced it where it had been when we first saw it. The ceremony was over; the elders of the village went to hold council and to interpret what the dead man had said.

764 In the swift tropical dusk, Sedefo and his son came to take us back to our camp. The drummers were adjusting the drums for the night's dancing. "He spoke, ai," he told

dancing to the snake god by whom she was possessed. 764
More people came, and these brought gifts of peanuts, [776]
cassava, sugar cane, rice. The food was thrown over the [789]
coffin and within the white circular path, on which a man was now dancing round and round in time to the drums. Faster and faster he twirled his way about the coffin, and now another joined him while a third walked slowly about the wooden box, a bunch of plantains in his hand, which he slashed from the stem with his machete so that they, too, fell over the coffin.

The men were dancing to the great Kromanti spirits; the tiger—jaguar—and the buzzard, two of the three forms [776] which the dreaded Kromanti obia can take. "Obia! Huh! Huh!" one ejaculated, imitating the tiger, as his dancing became wilder and wilder. As he ran about the village he wrested a branch from a tree and blindly slashed about him with it. He ran through the clump of thorn palms to our left and emerged with another branch, and now those about were on their guard, for to be struck with those thorns would cause serious lacerations. But the dancer's spirit, his Kromanti obia protected him against such consequences, for are not the Kromanti men immune to anything that wounds; are they not secure from danger of the iron bullets of a gun or the thrust of a machete? The girl with Vodu ran away as he came near her.

Soon, however, the drums were silent, and another shot was fired—the second salute to the dead. One of the elders of the village, bearing a bundle of several long green branches, took his place on one side of the coffin, a younger man on the other. We could not hear what he said, but as he finished speaking he struck the other three times over the bare back; the first two strokes lightly, but at the third he slashed as hard as he was able. It introduced the one note of merriment that afternoon. The people standing about laughed aloud as the ceremony was repeated. A woman, and then another man, were switched.

As this ended, Sedefo took the place of the elder, and in his hand was another kind of branch. This, too, was long, but except for a tuft at its very end it had been stripped of

enrich the soil. Now before a field is chosen for cutting, it 688
must be surveyed carefully to see that there are no snakes
to be injured; that no trees which have strong spirits like [824]
the silk-cotton tree, or the parasitic akatasi, will be [825]
destroyed; that no ant hill whether on the ground or
on a tree be disturbed. But Kasanya's wife's mother's
brother was careless, or unlucky. A small ant hill had
escaped his notice.

"The *Akantamasu* god is powerful. It is a bad god," [776]
Kasanya said over and over, making of it a refrain to his
story.

When the ant hill was destroyed, its spirit fixed itself
upon the family. Kasanya's wife's mother became ill, and
although the contents of one obia pot after another were [755]
used up in bathing her with sangrafu and the serabaki and
chembe leaves, she did not get better. Her husband, an
able obia man, made special charms for her to wear about
her neck, and sprinkled her with medicine with the feather
of the sacred opete, the vulture, but still her illness kept on.
At last they went to a diviner. To the village of Dahomey [787]
they went, the village where the most powerful obia was 688
lodged, and there she learned that the Akantamasu god [791]
had come to the family. The diviner told her how to serve
the god so that she might have respite—the days that were
sacred to him, the dances she must dance on these days, the
sacrifices to make. They knew that it would never be a
friendly god to them, for it had come as a kunu. There was
more trouble and more. The family gave many offerings,
and the possessed woman danced whenever the spirit seized
her, but soon she died, and the others have been dying
since.

"What happened to the man who destroyed the ant hill? 688
Did he get the Akantamasu gadu?"

"No, not he himself. His mother, and his sister, and his sister's children."

"But why?"

The answer was that kunu worked that way, and he went on to tell us about his sons. The first son had gone to the

and forth on the sandy bank to the rhythm of the voicees in 821
the drums, but their gods would not come. They could not 782
dance, they could not find peace while the drums spoke, and 789
so this disconsolate pacing went on week after week, on 776
those days when the river gods might be danced to.
Sometimes the pulse of the drumming, quickening for an interval,
stirred the dancers. A shudder would go through the body
of one or another and the dry throats would fall to uttering
the sacred cries, but almost the next instant the hand of the
drummer would go limp, and once more the listless,
agonized pacing would continue. The gods were angered.
When the drums called them from the river bottom, they
came grudgingly and remained sullen, refusing to make
their wishes known, and no gods or ancestors came to
counsel the wise men in their sleep how to bend the will
of the spirits of the river.

In the fields the parched earth baked in the merciless
heat until it was like whitened bone. The few plants that 731
had pushed their way up through the sandy soil were now 776
brown dust which any wind might scatter. But there was
no wind. No rain, no wind, for in the river the god of the
wind dwells, and in the sky the rain god, and these gods
are twins, and twins have but one soul, since it is with the [845]
gods as it is with humans.

No rain, no wind. Famine was upon the land.

At last, at the village of Opoku a woman had a dream. [987] ●
She was a pure albino, one of the type who, together with
those who show by the slight turn of red in their wooly [826]
hair a strain of albinism, are called Toné people, and are
identified with the river gods. To this Toné woman the
gods came in sleep, and spoke their will.

"And what was it you gave to the gods?" we asked 776
Sedefo, who had fallen silent at this point in his story. 782

"Mati," he said, after a pause, "I am not an important 731
man. You ask what I may not tell. My mouth cannot [829]
take upon itself to speak what concerns our big men."

This much he would say. A boat filled with things had
been sent down the river. Men standing at the river bank

484 But Bayo's pleasant story came to an abrupt end. Down
574 toward the bank came Sedefo and his companion, motioning
the men to join him. They all gathered in front of the guard
of palm fronds, and began to discuss something in low
[776 voices, while from the village came the staccato rhythms
782] to the Sky God and to the Kromanti spirits in tones at first
soft, but swelling and quickening as they continued.

Sedefo came up to us at last and said, "I will tell you something, but you must not think the people of Pa'aba are unfriendly. I will tell you this. Let us go on and make camp farther up the river. There is a provision ground not too far away. We will make it in time."

789 In the boat Bayo told us that many were possessed in
574 the village, and since here at Pa'aba they danced Kromanti
strong, the men did not think it safe to bring us to the village. The year before Kasanya had spent a trying night here. Two or three of the men had found guns and had gone tearing about the village, so that not alone had the women shut themselves up in their huts, as they often did at Kromanti dances, but the men, too, had had to go in hiding.

"That is why we are going on. But I have a strong Kromanti spirit myself. I will go back to Pa'aba tonight and watch the men dance," he said with a laugh.

3

574 It was already quite dark when we made the planting
[489] ground. Up a narrow footpath we followed Kasanya.

"*Koni, koni*—Take care, don't trip at night," he kept calling to us. "*Mbwogu*—Hurry," he urged, though we needed no urging to keep close behind him in this narrow dark shaft which cut the greater darkness of the bush in two.

Bibifo would sleep in our boat to watch the provisions, Kasanya explained as he led the way, for the clearing was so far from shore that it was not wise to leave the boats unwatched.

"It is far," he said. "Grounds are cleared that way—not too near a village, not too near the shore."

343 where, in the proper season, maripa nuts and rice were
251 dried.

One quarter differed very little from another, except
361 that in one there might grow the plant which yielded the
778 red and black beans used for the sacred rattles, and for
playing the game of adji, which entertained the spirit of
the dead while the body lay in state. Instead of a house to
the family gods, there might be found a mound of earth
in front of one doorway, with an axe-head lying upon it as a
shrine for a man's spirit, or a low forked stick sunk into the
ground, holding a pot with water and weeds in it for the
curing powers of its obia.

361 A village of any size had also a quarter in which stood the
344 communal buildings. The council house which might also
serve on occasion as the house for the dead was there. The
menstrual house for the women, a small building which was
recognized by a broken calabash, or a porcelain pot brought
from the white man's city, lying outside the entrance, stood
a little to the side. The Kromanti house, and perhaps an
enclosed shelter for the bush gods who shared the shrine
with the snake deities, was also located somewhere near
the open communal shrine. A village wherein lived the clan
361 head contained in addition a house for the ancestral spirits
346 of the clan. This was called a *Fa'aka-pau wosu*, literally a
[614] flagpole house, a euphemism for the shrine to the ancestors
769 for whom white cotton was put up on sticks. In this Fa'aka-
782 pau wosu prayers were offered up for all the important
ventures of the clan, and in time of stress a priest would
come there with sacrifices, to bid one of the ancestors to
enter his body and give him sight. When seizure came on,
such a priest prophesied. Sometimes the ancestors were
consulted in the same manner as that in which the will
of the dead was ascertained. Men would take up a sacred
plank and carry it in a state of possession; the elders would
[787] put questions to the ancestor who had been called. The
answers were construed as favorable or unfavorable
according to the way the plank tipped.

782 Now she could but say that the Granman had asked her to see to this.

"It is good medicine. Do not be afraid," she added, reassuringly.

She led the way to her quarter, but before we had gone past the open shrine she stopped, and her eyes narrowed as she tried to come to a decision. From the quarter we were approaching came a crooning, moaning sound.

●787 "A god speaks. The Apuku god has come to a woman this morning. Come. We will go to the G'aman's women," she said as she retraced her steps.

644 888 On a squared log in back of the enclosed shrine which adjoined the council house sat the Granman's principal wife. She was a woman who in her prime must have had beauty, but, though still erect, she had deep grooves on her face, and her breasts were the breasts of an old woman. Her head was closely shorn, as was the way of women whose children were grown. Like any other woman of the village she wore only the short cloth and the bit of kerchief which showed at her waist. Like the others she went to the provision ground almost daily. She and her younger daughter, [462] who was named Wilhelmina for the Queen of Holland, cared for their field together, and now they were working side by side.

644 Wilhelmina was more robust than her mother could have been at her age. She was tall, more her father's daughter. It was she who served his food and looked after his personal needs. She was the wife of the man who had brought the boat which Sedefo had rejected, because he did not trust its spirit. As she worked, her two children were with her, [856] the elder a child of three, sitting on the ground at her feet, and the other on her back, or in her lap nursing while she did her tasks.

Unlike her older sister, Wilhelmina had little of her father's astuteness, of his quick eye, or his schooled tongue. She went about with the slow, sensuous grace of someone not quite awake, while her older sister busied herself with making the rounds of the village, observing this and that

Chapter XIII

THE GODS SPEAK

1

600 EARLY the next morning we heard the voice of a drum coming from some unidentifiable direction, not too close, not too far away.

"That's the agida drum we hear?" we asked Tenemi when she came to sweep the council house.

"Ai."

"It sounds far away."

"It's across the river. Dida is dancing. . . . "

But here she stopped, remembering, as we did, that she had agreed to come for us when Dida danced, if the god made Dida herself forget to fetch us to see her dancing.

"You can't take us to her, Tenemi?"

"It's across the river, and it's early."

"When did she leave this village?"

"Late last night."

As an after thought Tenemi added, "Dida has a house across the river. She went to her own quarter."

2

787 A few minutes later the white woman found herself walking toward the partially cleared ground outside the village, past the menstrual house and the open shrine to the great gods which stood almost directly opposite it. There were three women in the house, dressed in faded

cloths, their hair disheveled, their faces without the glint 787
which the oil gave to their dark skins, and their eyes without the touch of dark flame which the gleaming skins brought out. One of these women stood leaning against a doorpost trembling. Her hands were clenched, and her mouth moved without pause, and without sound.

"She hears the agida?"

"Ai. She wants to dance, but she can't. Her god is troubling her."

The white woman must not stop with them longer, and she must not come closer, the two women who stood beside their quivering companion called out at once, for the obia which she wore about her neck would be contaminated if brought too close to them, and its power to protect the wearer against danger would leave it at once.

"Do not come too close. Tomorrow I will return to my house, and after I have bathed and washed in pemba, I will be clean again, and then I will come to see you," the younger of the two women said.

The other said, "When you go there," and she pointed toward the woman's path, "do not go by the way of the broken calabashes. That is the unclean way. It is the path [341]
for the women who stay in this house."

Down the clearing the white woman continued until, 343
when she turned, the open cooking shelter of Bassia Anaisi's quarter faced her. The floor of the shelter was of red clay, raised well above the clearing itself. A woman was laying a fire there, putting down the long sticks one end close to the other in the center, so that they radiated outwards in what seemed a perfect circle. Her child, who was fitted out with obias on neck and wrists and right ankle, sat [524]
near by watching her, and playing with a gourd doll.

The voice of the agida had a moment before died down, 533
and now a song reached the white woman. It came not from across the river, but from somewhere directly behind the houses grouped about the clearing beyond the cooking shelter. The song was a repetition of several melodic phrases, sung in varying rhythms, so that it had a disturb-

"Yes, move closer." 533 776

The white woman now went toward the open door, 342
and through it saw a little of the inside of the house. Like
all Bush Negro houses, it had no windows of any kind,
and what light there was came from this low open doorway.
Near the door sat the woman who belonged to the family of
the Granman. In her hand she held an egg-shaped piece 787
of clay which she rubbed between her hands to the rhythm 533
of her song, and at intervals lifted first one hand, then the [302]
other, rubbing the white clay on her face and arms. The
thin layer of white over the dark of her skin gave to her
appearance in the dark house a strange color. She swayed
on her low bench as she sang, her body curving from her
hips first to one side, then to the other.

"Ondyi, ondyi," she sang over and over, and with the quickening of voice, she called "bonsu."

This word "Ondyi," the women explained, when they 787
urged the stranger to greet the god as was fitting, was the
greeting of the deity, the god's way of saying their everyday word "Odi."

The eyes of the woman at the door were half-closed as she sang, and she seemed dispirited, though with the quickened swaying she did rouse herself for an instant. She had no kerchief on her head, and none about her breasts.

"Her god hasn't got her very hard," the women said. "Go inside, perhaps when you speak with him, he will begin to stir. They want you to come in."

Into the house the white woman brought her bench, and sat down close to the possessed woman at the door. When she became accustomed to the darkness of the house, she saw a pair of eyes fixed on her from the farthest wall. The figure against this wall was so much the color of the house itself that it was not until a few moments had passed that the crouching form of an old woman was distinguishable. The old woman sat motionless, her eyes fastened on the stranger.

The white woman freed herself from the intent stare 782
of the old woman against the wall only when a sudden 776

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hissing sound so startled her that she faced quickly about. Now two other eyes met hers. They belonged to a figure on a low bench, seated with its back to the door, facing the darkness of the unbroken walls, but with head turned to watch the stranger. The figure was in white—tunic, cloths about the breasts and on the head, arms, throat, and body, all were white. But of a greater whiteness yet was the terrifying, macabre face in which the line of the mouth alone, and the living black of the eyes, showed. Beside this white figure stood a streaked glass tumbler, filled with a whitish liquid. This tumbler had been at the lips of the white form when the stranger turned to see where the hissing came from. Now that the glass was replaced, the whitened hands began kneading a piece of clay and rubbing face and throat and arms with the hands. While doing this, the body swayed and the voice chanted.

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"*From the river I come,*
And I say to you all,
Greetings.
All you Negroes,
Be greeted.

From the river I come,
I say to the white woman,
Greetings.
I say you came as a friend,
I say you came not for evil.

From the river I come,
I say to you all,
Be greeted."

Now the first woman moved closer to the stranger and put her arms about her, streaking her with clay.

"*Ondyi, Ondyi-o!*
I am Affi
I am Kantamasi-o!
Ondyi, ondyi,

THE GODS SPEAK

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[539]

Woman, I care for you,
I will be your god."

There was consternation among the women who stood outside listening. The Akantamasu god was one of the strongest on the river. He ranked only slightly under the great obia spirits, which the Sky God when creating the world had sent as wisdom for the living to combat the capricious lesser gods, and humans who were dominated by evil spirits. Differing from the obia spirits, however, who befriended the living, and brought healing to them, the Akantamasu god was an avenger, surpassed alone by the yorka, the ghosts, who avenged by killing instantly when they chose, while the Akantamasu god killed more slowly.

But there was concern for the possessed woman, as well. She had spoken the name Affi, her day name, the name which summoned her soul. When not in a state of possession, she would never have spoken it before a stranger, except in a whisper to an obia man who came to cure her, or to a diviner to whom she came to ask why her soul was troubled. [551]

Presently the white figure rose, breaking the tension, and, chanting, went from the hut into the clearing. Affi and the white woman followed. In the light of the clearing, a faint resemblance could be seen in the grace of the body of the figure in white to the pleasant Amasina. Of the brown of her skin, only the ankles and feet showed.

Both of the possessed women began pacing back and forth in the clearing, in time to the rhythm of their songs, but while Amasina danced with an easy stride, Affi shook and quivered and moaned.

"When the gods come, we do not speak. We sing. The speech of the gods is song. So it is," one woman whispered. [533]

Another said, indicating Affi, "Her god troubles her. She gave you a strong god. Are you afraid?"

"When the god comes to you, you will speak tongues. Now you have two gods. When Kesekia comes to you, you will sing Kesekia songs, you will dance to him."

787 776 When a male snake god came, then it was easy to know, the women said. If the possessed one rolled face downward it was a male god, and he was courting the spirits of the earth, but if face upward then it was a female snake. "*Na muye opo-i-mbe gi 'a tapu*—The woman opens her womb for the sky," they said, using the precise image for one who was being wooed by the spirits who lived above.

3

123 When the white woman was about to enter the council house, Granman Yankuso called to her. He was standing in front of his house, surrounded by women, who were talking to him in low, excited voices.

"*Bak'a muye*—White woman," he said, looking at her searchingly, and saying nothing. "White woman," he repeated, after a short silence, "white mother, good morning. Are you awake?"

His voice sounded a little troubled, but not unfriendly. It helped the white woman to regain her self-possession.

"They sing well down below, Granman," she said, and went into the council house.

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787 [123] Whatever Granman Yankuso thought of the white woman's having witnessed the possession of the women of his village, he did not refuse permission to her and her husband to return to the hut.

Amasina and Affi were still in the clearing, dancing to their own songs. Women came up with their children, bringing more and more calabashes of rice. Amasina took up each child in her arms, and caressed it gently, streaking it with the white clay as she did so, and singing the while,

[539] "*I come from the river.*
You shall be cooled,
You shall be well."

Affi's moaning had become more and more faint, and her pacing, by this time, was listless. Her god would not take

her into his power strongly enough to give her the release 987
she craved.

Amasina sang,

"I come from the river.
I tell all you people,
This man, this woman
Are friends.
They come not for evil.

Go to the G'aman,
Say to him.
These people are friends,
They bring us no evil."

[539]

Then her god, speaking through her, sang an explanation to the white people. From the river he came, bringing healing to all those who were fevered, caring for all those who were sick. Those who could, came to him, but those who could not come, he would visit and bring them healing. Now he must make the round of the village, go to the houses, and see those who were ill.

Singing, Amasina beckoned us to follow her, and as she led the way she danced in undulating steps from one end of the village to another, visiting the sick, singing the cure her god was bringing them in the words he was speaking through her.

The white people could stay with her no longer. Word came that the boat which was to take them across the river to the village of the Granman's father was ready, and they must go. The women suggested, however, that if the whites cared to make a gift to the god who had spoken so well of them, it would be acceptable, and they hurried to their stores to get a gift. [123]

As they passed the council house and turned toward the small hut behind it where their supplies were kept, they heard a new sound. It was a choking sound, torn from an unwilling throat. Seated quite alone on a low stool in front

787 [412] of the mortar in which she had been pounding maripa nuts was the Granman's younger wife. The pestle had fallen from her shaking fingers. She gave the intruders no attention, for she, too, was possessed by her god,—by Toné, god of the river.

"*Ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke! Ke-ke-ke-ke-ke-ke!*" The syllables fell from her and, as the white people stood by, her shaking stopped, the sounds did not go on. Then they began again, her body racked, her voice choked. The Toné people do not speak when they are possessed, it is through sounds such as these that the god of the river makes known his wishes.

Women came running toward us. "Your boat is ready, Bak'a," they said.

787 431 173 The whites returned with the bracelets to find that the two women to whom they brought their offerings had come as far as the Granman's quarter of the village. Affi's greeting of "Ondyi!" had died down to a whisper. Disconsolately she followed Amasina, who, in the white cloth which reached almost to her ankles, looked tall and sinuous, and moved as though there were something in the still air to send her body curving to one side and to the other.

As the possessed women and those with them entered the quarter, the elder wife of Yankuso came toward Amasina with a large calabash of rice.

"All those who have the same god come with gifts. Amasina has the strongest god of all. It is a white god," a woman explained.

[822] White was the color for the ancestors, and hers was the god of a great priestess of the family. It was the god Towenu, the great Papa god, the giver of children, the jealous one, who came to her. If he cared for his priestess too well, he allowed her no children. The mention of his name the day before had brought him, and, coming, he vouched for the friendliness of the strangers.

Amasina put her arms about the older woman as she had done to the others who came to her. She sang once more her message:

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[539]

"Wife of the G'aman,
I come from the river.
Go to the G'aman
Say to him,
These strangers are friends,
They bring no evil."

It was the god speaking, and the Granman's wife received with lowered head the words spoken through the priestess.

"Ai, my master. Ai, Massa Gadu," she said.

5

The Granman's paternal village was directly across the river from Asindopo Lantiwe. It was called Akisiamau, literally "Took with an outstretched hand," but whether there was also some meaning in the phrase not intended for the uninitiated, we could not learn. In size it was not much larger than the Granman's village, and again and again we recognized houses which were his by the crest-like carvings on the doorposts, that reproduced the design found not only at the side of the council-house door, but at the door of all other houses at Asindopo Lantiwe which were his. 361 643 [423]

Except for several old people who sat about in the shade and waited for the strangers to come to them with their greetings, the entire village followed us as we made our way down one path and another. 123

"*Bak'a, Ame'ika Bak'a, Ame'ika Fandya!*—White man. American white man, American Fandya!" the children called after us, as they ran at our heels, touching our canteens, our sun helmets, and shoes.

The Granman had spoken with especial fondness of his father's house, and it was there that we asked first to be taken. It was not occupied, we were told, and none might enter it. Above the top crosspiece white cotton was draped. Except that its door was closed, it showed no signs of being 342 643

778 of earth which filled the rest of the hut. In the left-hand
346 corner was a covered whitened vessel for the god called
Kentina Dagowe. This Kentina Dagowe was a deity who
was the offspring of the Dagowe snake, and the Apuku god
776 of the bush whose name was Kentina. In him, as in so many
778 other of the spirits, we found exemplified the Bush Negro's
concept of the world which held that the gods mated as
did humans, that all which stirred and had life came into
[773] being by such matings.

Other spirits also came to this house, the woman went
on. Mundewaya, another of the bush gods, was worshiped
at the white-covered pot in the opposite corner, while
beside it lay the vessel to which the spirit of a third might
come. This one was the most powerful of all bush gods,
and his name was Danhowao. There were other objects
on the platform. Two stools, daubed with sacred clay, had
their place there, and in the center was an image of wood,
a rounded pot set on a base that tapered from the ground
toward it, and this was to the Nanai, the ancestors.

The old woman said, "For the Apuku gods, we only play
the tumao drum. The Apuku are mostly women's gods, but
some men have them, and the men who have them play
the drums. When the god comes to you, then if you are not
[888] too old you dance. But we old women do not dance. When
the god comes to me, then I begin to shake. I go into this
house on the day we call him, and they play the drum.
Then I talk to the god. If I have something to beg of him
for myself, or for someone else, then I put the pot which
● [787] belongs to him on my head, and the drum calls him. When
my body begins to shake, then it is the god. He has come,
and when I speak it is not I but the god speaking."

776 From the clearing the talk of those who had remained
609 outside came through the thin woven walls of the shrine.
[203] From one to another we could hear the news spread that
in the village of the Granman across the river the gods had
spoken for the whites.

In the hut, we listened to the old woman inside whose
shrine we stood.

353 themselves, and the blade-like pieces of gourd which they
531 used for spoons, and which bore the same symbols as the
415 dishes.

"Our men make fine things here in the true, true
462 Saramacca," Dida said when we entered her quarter, and
531 sat in her house. "Look at the carvings I have."

Her body was still white with pemba. Her manner was still a little vague.

"Did you dance this morning?"

"Ai."

"We heard the agida drum play when we were in the
776 council house of the Granman."

787 "Ai, Kesekia is a big god. When he comes, his voice is strong."

But she showed no willingness to talk, and we could tell by the repeated twitching of her body that she had still to dance to her god. Leaving her we continued up the path toward houses we had not yet visited. The white man, with a man who was guiding him and the bassia from Asindopo Lantiwe, walked ahead, while the children crowded about the white woman who was giving them safety pins which they at once put in their hair.

778 "There is the Vodu house," said the man who acted as guide, and he led the way through the low doorway into
346 the hut.

Inside, though smaller than the shrine to the gods of the bush, it differed from it but little. It had the same clay floor, the same raised altar on which stood stools washed in white clay, and several covered, whitened vessels, an image, and the round balls of clay.

"May I go closer and look at the image there?"

"Yes, go."

[352] The stools resembled those in ordinary use, but whatever design they may have had was obscured by the white clay which covered them. The vessels were not unlike those in
[415] the other shrine we had visited or those which rested on the heads of village gods which stood under low, roofed-over shelters on the main village paths. Turning, the white man

778 peered into the inner darkness, the whites of their eyes
533 moving with the movements of the strangers.

Gently the drummer laid the great cylinder of wood flat
776 on the ground, and from the thatch took down a hard-wood stick, dark and smooth with use. The drum filled more than half of the wall near which it lay. Stooping, the drummer began to call the Vodu gods. It was the rhythm we had heard from across the river early in the morning. The drumming had sounded low and distant then, but in this small enclosure the volume of sound was deafening. It seemed to be pushing against the yielding woven walls, pushing outwards and up.

The rhythm was disturbingly irregular. There was, in the sense of the steady rhythms of the dances, no rhythm at all, and this uncertainty of beat added to the volume of sound racked the listeners. When we thought we heard a repetition of an interval, a sudden change in tempo brought us up with a start. On and on the man struck the drumhead, sounding the heavy beats with the stick, while with his free hand he kept up a running fire of obbligato to the message for the god.

The heads in the doorway began to move nervously this way and that as the message to the god continued, when suddenly they disappeared behind someone who was coming at a run. A moment later Dida was in the hut.

787 She was again possessed. Her body shook with the intensity with which she experienced her god, and her eyes glowed with a steady fire. Back and forth she paced, and when the drum had sounded, she addressed herself to it, listening for its voice and answering, listening again and answering in tones which grew more and more harsh. Then she turned to us, and began to chant

"I am the god Kesekia
[539] *From back of the prison,*
From the French shore,
I come.
I am the god Kesekia."

THE GODS SPEAK

Once more she resumed her frenzied pacing, and from time to time as the drum spoke she whirled about and replied. Now and again she would repeat the phrases which the bassia said was the French snake god speaking— "Ti donc!" "Kesifo, kesifo!" "Ti donc!" 787

"Speak to the god," said the bassia. "Speak to him in the French tongue. He will answer you."

In spite of the bassia's urging, we stood silent, for it was crowded in the little hut, and Dida's god was not as genial a one as was Amasina's. Her body shook and quivered, her pupils were dilated, her voice became harsher as she turned to us with her hissing cries.

"Ti donc!

"Kesifo!

"Ti donc!"

For a moment, the god had done speaking on the drum. Gently the stick tapped against the wood, and the drummer's left hand was quiet. Then once more the roaring note began, and as the heads disappeared from the doorway, a second form shot inside.

A young woman entered. She had no white on her body, as had Dida, nor was there any kerchief on her head or about her breasts. When the drum sounded she had been in her house seeing to her small infant, but hearing the agida speak the words of the Vodu god, she could not hold back longer, for her god came into her and sent her to the shrine.

Now there were two who paced inside the enclosure, calling their answers to the drumbeats, until once more the steady tapping of the stick on the wood took the place of the strokes on the drumhead, and the second woman sang: 787 539

"*Maumbe-wa,*
Maumbe-o,
Father Manga
Father Maumbe.
God Maumbe-wo
God Malimbe, Dagowe.
Tutu calls, ye-o

[533]

787
539
[533]

Tutu calls, ye-o.
God is there in the river alone,
God Tutu calls,
Ye-o, yo."

787 So the young woman sang as she paced, her body twitching and quivering, while Dida repeated her exclamations. The man again took up his invocation to the gods, then resumed the soft tapping against the wood.

He said to us as he tapped, "My own god is Agida Wenowa. She is a Vodu god, and when I dance I put a parrot feather in my hair. When I play the agida, then all Vodu gods come. The agida is the drum for the Vodu gods."

As he spoke to the slow beating, yet two more figures came crowding in. We had been so intent on the two possessed women and on what the drummer was telling that, not until these new arrivals were at our side, did we notice them. One of them was Affi, the other Amasina. They were as we had left them, Amasina still in her white tunic and kerchiefs, her face and upper body yet more thickly coated with white so that only the eyes were alive, Affi still a grayish color, still anguished.

"We heard the voice of the god. We came."

But there was no longer room in the small shrine for the women to dance. The beating of the stick became fainter and fainter; the drummer no longer touched the skin which topped the drum. Fainter and fainter still came the beat, until the young woman who stood there without white on her body shook herself, as though she were coming awake. For a moment, all was quiet.

"He is gone."

"The god is gone."

"He has released her."

The drummer put back his stick. Slowly he lifted the drum; gently he stood the agida upright in its corner.

7

776
609 In the Granman's council house, voices of people standing outside reached us. From one to another the news was told.

177 186 Here is our bush. Our gods are here, and our ancestors come at our call. There is the world—*na g'on tapu*. There is the land of our old ancestors."

He stopped and covered his face with his hands, remaining deep in thought. But when he spoke again, his voice was calm.

177 123 "Mati, let us see all that the white man has brought. Here deep in the bush, all this has come to us that even children might see. Let us see all."

On the screen appeared a priest. He wore a grass skirt used in a sacred dance, a skirt like the one we had had made for us here on the river, and his face was covered, mask-like, with white clay.

"Ai, mati," exclaimed the Granman, as everyone gasped at what they saw.

The next picture showed the same priest dancing. Two men held his arms.

"When Kromanti gets a man in the ancestral country, it comes so strong that he has to be held in check, friends. So it is here, too."

9

123 So great was the fascination of the Granman and of all his people with the phonograph that many times we had occasion to feel if it were not for Apanto's curse, and the habit of elastic to stretch, and of glue to be affected by tropical heat, the machine would have overcome for us what distrust there was of our interest in their beliefs—that it might even have changed the decision of the ancestors when they were consulted by priests in Dahomey—a decision which ruled that the white man and his woman were not to be given the secrets of their worship.

[787] Whatever the ancestors had told the men who carried on their heads the sacred plank which was used for consulting the ancestral will, the attitude of the people showed that the white man could not be received in the bush without distrust. The intentions of a white man might be friendly,

yet his findings might in time serve the enemy. We were 123
soldiers bringing toys, as the image of the krutu had
suggested.

Since life in the bush, for strangers like ourselves, was lived in terms of days, and each day was taken for what it might bring, we were grateful to those gods who had spoken for us, and watched the effect of the ancestral edict.

Before dawn of the day which followed the ceremony of asking the will of the ancestors, men came to counsel with the Granman, and from then onward many men were about the village. The young boys found their toy guns again, and the little girls played on the river bank. The widow who was so susceptible to evil influences no longer appeared in the central clearing with her child on her back, stamping her rice, or drying her peanuts. Her door was shut. Fenekonde was no longer about, for she had gone to the menstrual house, and Tene[illegible] who came to sweep the council house each morning now wore a new obia on a long, twisted, white cord, hung from shoulder to side. She was polite, formal, and she worked fast.

Late that afternoon the obia man who had appeared at 123
the first council meeting with wide stripes of clay came 791
again, and his wife accompanied him. They were the best 787
diviners on the river. From the corner of the council house
the large mat which had been standing rolled up was carried [285]
into a closed hut, so that he might sit on it, and perform his magic to see what the future held for the destiny of the Saramacca people, and what immediate threat the white man's coming boded. Before leaving for the hut where the mat was prepared the man and woman sat with us in the council house in the company of the Granman. They apparently needed to know our individual names for their task. While we sat there, the white woman absently began to play with the obia about her neck, and this seemed a signal for the other woman to take hers into her hands and begin to mutter an invocation, for the stranger's careless playing appeared to her as the white man's way of casting a spell.

789 776 This, he went on to explain, had the meaning that obia was not so great as the very great gods, and it was not to be ranked with the lesser deities who served as emissaries for the great gods, yet when the great gods wanted to help mankind, it was through obia that they healed and purified, it was to obia that men were instructed to turn.

773 776 It seems that when the Sky God created the Earth Mother and the Mother of the River, he also created man and beast. Man had a poor time of it, pitting himself against the forces of earth and sky and water. And so that man might survive, the Sky God had had to send obia into the world to help man. Obia was not a god, it was a spirit. It gave people knowledge of herbs which cured, and herbs which prevented sickness. Obia warned of danger, and made known those properties of earth and water and air which
● [787 889] healed and calmed. Obia taught the use of the band of metal on the arm, or the string about the waist which forewarned of evil, and made man wary and alert.

After obia came into the world, the Sky God sent Akantamasu, the god of the ant hill, to plague man. Perhaps obia had made of man an overbearing creature, defiant even against the great gods, so that the Sky God brought the Akantamasu spirit into being to teach him humility.

The answer of the Bush Negro was, of course, that so it was, and so it had been long ago, but why, he did not know. The Sky God had willed it so, and the Sky God was so far from man that he never vouchsafed explanations to human beings, and they in turn rarely taxed him to ease their bewilderment.

769 775 776 There was also the power of the ancestors, but our Bush Negro friends were never certain as to how they ranked in the supernatural hierarchy. Some said they ranked after the Earth Mother and the Mother of the River, that they were greater than obia, because the ancestors punished as well as helped mankind, and when angered their punishment came swifter than that of the powerful Akantamasu gods. Others said the ancestors were greater than obia, because obia had been given to the ancestors long ago,

and it was they who in dream or vision, or in a state of 769
possession, instructed living men in the ways of yet greater [787]
and greater obia. But there were those who held that obia 775
ranked after the greatest of the deities, that obia surpassed 776
the power of the ancestors, for obia knew how to make "*yorka tapu*"—preventives against troublesome ghosts, and obia men could summon the dead to enter the body of a living man to make revelations.

Whatever the position of obia in the supernatural world, its place on earth was to serve man, for of all living beings, man alone knew obia.

2

What were the manifestations of obia in the life of the 789
Bush Negro as we found them? 778

A black pot with its magic powers was an obia pot, the [415]
charm worn about the neck was called an obia, the medicines we gave the natives for their eyes or their cuts were called white man's obia, and their own mixture of weeds steeped [278]
in water, which stood in the burning sun gathering a green scum until it should be ready for use, was also obia. Young Yamati who had danced susa for us did not have a cord about his neck, but, he had assured us, he had obia for long life as did his partner Sabape, though his own could [304]
not be seen, since it consisted of several obia cuts made shortly after birth, which served instead of the cord. The strings about the waists of children were obias. The slight cuts to be noticed on men's arms, on thighs, below the knee, below the shoulder blades were obia cuts, too.

Nor was that all.

Bayo had said to us, "When obia comes a man does 776
bad things. He destroys. When mine comes, it is ugly 789
sometimes."

It was obia, too—Apanto's obia—which had stopped our phonograph, and obia again, invoked this time by Bayo, which had strengthened the spirit of the machine.

We talked about obia to an elder, a village head, from one of the down-river settlements, which was not, however,

776 A man who wished to buy a god for his son went to a
432 renowned obia man and agreed to pay him a certain sum
424 of money if, at the end of the period of training, the god
came to the boy.

"When the obia man says the boy is ready, they give a
dance. At this dance, the drum is played for the god, and
[787] the boy must dance. If the god comes to him, then the
obia man gets his money, but if the god does not come,
then he does not get what was promised him, because they
had made an agreement for a god, and no god came."

881 The training was not very difficult—it was not like the
869 training for becoming an obia man. A boy was given obia
776 water to wash in. Every eight days the water in the obia
pot was changed, and this bathing continued for three
moons. When the ritual of purification was over, he was
[783] taught the drum rhythms of the god, the invocations which
the drum sounded, and the spoken invocations. Songs, and make-up for the dancing, and the dancing itself he was taught, and when he might call upon the god, and what he must do when the god comes, and what offerings the god was to receive. If the god spoke "tongues," he was also instructed in the appropriate language. There were the words of the mocking little Apuku gods and the sounds which only Toné people made, and there was the "Kromanti tongo."

"Can all the gods be bought?" we asked.

432 "Kweti, kweti!" he shook his head in emphatic denial.
776 "The river gods cannot be bought. You are born a Toné
789 man or woman, or the Toné god comes to you from your
family. But all the Vodu gods you can buy; and the god Bongo, the alligator; and the ant hill gods and the gods of the kankan tree, and the Apuku bush gods." He paused for an instant, as if he were considering something. "And men buy Kromanti for their sons, if they have none to give them. Almost every man in the bush has Kromanti. If he hasn't it, then he tries to buy it for his sons. A man needs Kromanti. When he has the Kromanti spirit, fire cannot hurt him, nor glass, nor anything that cuts—

"OBIA COMES!"

"Put them on. See the moon? You will catch fresh colds 796
if you sit in the moonlight with your heads uncovered." [821]

So with sun helmets on our heads we sat, and, as we 781
listened to the new rhythms of the drums, there came a 796
shriek from the river which brought us to our feet. Those 776
who were not dancing ran up the hill away from the drums.

"Obia! Obia comes! It is the Kromanti!" were the cries, 787
and our cook and our town man placed themselves in line
across the front of our hut, watching uneasily.

"They will destroy all you have if they get inside," they called to us, "we must try to keep them out."

Up from the river, along the path he had trodden but a while before, came a man whom we could not recognize in the disguise given him by the paint on his face. Half his face was white, half a deep red, and we later learned what we did not then know, that this was the face marking of the Djadja Kromanti and that this man was possessed by one of the two Kromanti spirits which carry danger to those who are present when the seizure comes. He advanced toward the drums, machete in hand, as though he were stalking his prey, his legs raised high at every step, trailing some enemy. At his mouth the foam was gathering, and
the words he uttered were in the Kromanti tongo, the sacred [198]
speech not understood by the uninitiated.

The songs changed in character, and the singers were men. The women who had not run away were dancing a quick accompaniment to the drum beats, adding their shrill voices to the singing and the intensity of the cries of the possessed man. When the possessed man reached the hut, he stopped in front of the drummers. As their rhythms poured out of the barrel-like drums, he answered stroke for stroke with shouted cries in his sacred secret language, raising his machete higher and higher, until, with a quick stroke, he slashed at two of the players who were seated side by side on a log. He missed them by what seemed a hair's breadth as his machete, whistling through the narrow space between their bodies, sank deep into the log on which they sat.

796 796 781 787 Other cries now came to us, and from the bush a second possessed man burst into the clearing. He, too, had a machete, and he made straight for our hut. But obia did not prompt him to insist on entering, and he came close to us, gibbering in our faces, and then, stepping high as had the other, went his way to slash at our washbasins, sending one of them, that we treasure as a memory of that night's adventure, hurtling into the bush with a deep dent in its side.

From the river came renewed shouts, and some of the men dashed to the bank to jump into a canoe and paddle into the rapids, so that they might watch the possessed man who had leaped into the river to pit his strength against the fast water. On and on he swam upstream in the foaming water, as from the bank we watched his progress uneasily in the clear light of the moon. Finally obia left him, and the men in the boat seized his inert form and brought him back to shore.

796 787 When we returned to our hut, we found several others possessed. Obia had claimed six or seven, some with faces painted half white, half red, as was that of the first man, others with faces whitened, while still others had white faces with black markings. These last had Tigri, and the white was for Opete. Those who danced for the buzzard had no machetes, but went about in a circle, moving with bodies bent forward from their waists and with arms thrown back in imitation of the bird from which their spirit took its name.

One man with the Tigri face-painting took away the apinti from the drummer and placing it in the center of the clearing leaned over it and began drumming faster rhythms. Now indeed obia itself was drumming.

796 273 Long before this, we had observed the amenities of the occasion. As hosts, our duty was to provide the ceremonial rum with which the spirits needed to be regaled, and our cook, holding the bottle of rum for us, filled and refilled the small glass which we offered to men and women. Some did not drink at all but poured part of the rum on the

ground, rubbing the remainder over arms and upper body. 776
Some took a sip and, like the others, poured the rest as a 273
libation to the Earth Mother. Few drank more than a little, and only the men had as much as half of the small wine glass we were using.

The bassia of Gankwe came to us. "Do not be afraid. Obia has come strong, but we have prepared for it. The men will not hurt people."

Led by him, we passed from one dancer to the next, giving to this one a sip, to that one a taste. But there was one elderly man who would not drink.

"Not until I get obia," he said, "and obia does not come to me tonight."

Not all the possessed men were slashing about with 796
cutlasses. One man pulled up grass, eating part and throw- 787
ing the rest over his head. Another in the strength of his possession uprooted large clumps of brush, and one broke off a liana of some size and wrapped it about his body, and danced with it.

Songs, dancing men, dancing women, machetes flashing in the moonlight . . . and over all the beat of the drum. This was the dance of the Kromanti obia.

Now the man who had refused a drink came up. He was trembling.

"Obia comes!" he cried. "Give me rum!"

As he tossed off the drink, he dashed toward the possessed men. In his hand was a rattle, the first we had seen at this [534]
dance. The rattle is sacred to the Kromanti, and possession can be brought on by shaking it even when there are no drums. As he danced, he supplemented the rhythm of the drums with his rattle, and his dancing surpassed in its fury that of all the others. Men kept out of his way as he dashed back and forth in his contortions, and he continued his gyrations as those with painted faces, whom obia was releasing, began to feel exhaustion.

The drums never stopped. As long as obia remained unsatisfied, they would need to play on and on. While the drummers beat the Kromanti rhythms, and the man with

796 his rattle danced his dance, the moon sank behind the screen
787 of branches.

It was late. Slowly the last dancer came out of his orgy of possession. One by one the drums stopped until, for a moment, all was quiet. Then, taking the apinti drum up the path beyond our clearing, one of the drummers drummed an invocation to the spirits that had come.

We trained our flashlights on the path which led to the river, lighting the way of the dancers to their waiting boats, while they sang for us the seketi song we had heard the night of Zimbi's funeral.

[533] [539]
Thank you, thank you, white man,
For coming to the Saramacca River,
For bringing us your diamond fire,
To light the darkness of our path.

5

764
796 At the village opposite our base camp, a girl had died shortly before our return from up river. The eighth night after the death was to be commemorated with the usual dancing of "eighth-day night," and with the ceremony of throwing away food for the spirit of the dead.

"Come tonight and we will dance for you," the men of the village said. It was agreed that they should come for us when they were through with the ceremony for throwing away the food, for the bereaved family would not look kindly upon the intrusion of the whites at the ceremony.

As we waited for the messenger, Bayo prowled about uneasily. He had been nervous for the past few days. His spirits had been troubling him, and he said he needed to dance. It was some time since he had danced, and his spirits were vexed with him for this neglect.

"If they dance Kromanti, I will dance, too," he said.

We talked with him of the rum we would have to take. The strength in which it was distilled made it necessary to cut it with water. Bayo watched us as we took out one bottle, prepared the rum, and then took up another. His hand interposed.

"OBIA COMES!" 764

Opete kwasi Adjaini-o 533
Opete kwasi Adjaini-obia-o 539
Opete kwasi
Tide Adjaini-a weti kwao, kwao, kwao, kwao.

The chorus repeated,

Opete kwaso, Adjaini-o-yi
Opete kwaso, Adjaini-o-yo
Opete kwaso, Adjaini-o-kumoni!

They were becoming more and more agitated. The rattles sounded a faster tempo, the drums beat louder, and the music swung into another song.

Amanu Djadja-o
O-o-o-o-o-o
Amanu Djadja-o
O ye-e-e
Kuma, luku, mowa,
O-e Mama-e
O-o-o-o-o - o - o . . .

This was a song of greeting for the Djadja spirit. Bayo 764
still urged the rhythms out of the improvised apinti which 533
he was playing. The drummers were calling all the Kromanti spirits, the buzzard called Opete, the jaguar, Tigri, and Djadja, the "devil." Would they come?

The question was answered soon enough. Out of the 787
forest into the clearing ran one whose obia had come to him. It was Opete obia and, in his strength of possession, he had torn off two branches from a palm tree in the bush. These he held under his arms, so that, as he pranced about in his dance, he impersonated the awkwardness of the great carrion bird which gave its name to his obia. The tufts of palm leaves projecting from behind his flexed arms were wings. He leaped as in flight, then with startling rapidity he began turning round and round to the flapping of his wings.

Apanto suddenly seized a stick we held and, whirling it 787
about our heads, was off to his dance, joining the six or 796

787 796 seven men who were dancing the individual dances of their spirits. His dancing was unlike any we had seen on the river. There was a stealthy, effeminate grace in his movements, which produced a strange effect on the visitors. Suddenly it struck us—Apanto was one of those who had the dreaded Tigri! When he fought, he fought with his finger nails, not his fists, and when he danced, he danced with the feline grace of the tiger trailing his prey.

Suddenly the drums faltered. People near us cried out. Voices were heard.

"Bayo!"

"Bayo has gone into the bush!"

"Sound the drums to bring him back!"

787 In the silence of the moment, we could hear from the direction of the river the cries of our friend, now in the grip of obia. "*Hoi, hoi, hoi! Obia! Hoi!*"

The lull in the drumming was only momentary, for instantly another man jumped for the makeshift drum, which Bayo had left, and the voice of the spirits once more rolled out. Ten, twelve men were whirling before us in their dance, and now more joined them, until it was impossible to remain seated, and we rose, and stood on guard.

More cries. These came from the village. Someone else had got obia.

A woman dashed up to us. "Run, white people, run! Come inside my house! Obia has come too soon! Obia is bad tonight! You will be hurt!"

As we shook our heads, she hurried to a near-by house, and we could hear the slam of the door and the sound of the wooden bolt as it was shot to. She had done what she could for the visitors. If they would stay, let them take the consequences.

Before us a creeping figure appeared, with eyes fixed upon us, his muscles tense, as if ready for a spring. The dancing men who were not yet possessed, closed in front of us. They held him as he crouched there, glaring. Those who restrained him called to the others.

"See to the guns!"

"OBIA COMES!"

"Hide the bush knives!"

These Kromanti men, in the strength of their obia, try to seize weapons made of iron, and if they succeed in wresting from a man a machete or gun, nothing is safe. Apanto, the obia man, and the old men of the village, had no wish for tragedy.

"Sound the drums louder, faster!" came the cry. "Call Bayo from the bush!"

The drummers redoubled their efforts, until at last Bayo's spirit responded to their call.

"Look out! Take care!" called the women who had stayed outside their huts, as they ran before us up the path, away from the two men whose obia was so dangerous. "It is Bayo! Obia came!"

It was indeed Bayo, but not a recognizable Bayo. He was on all fours. His knees and shins dragged over the stony path on which he crawled so that we dared not think of the lacerations we would see the following day. He stared about him wildly. Saliva drooled from his mouth, and his tongue lolled from between his parted lips. Two of the older men had him in charge, and several of those who had been dancing now came to his side to restrain him should he attempt to leap.

"Stop the drums!" came the command, and in a few moments the stillness of the night was restored to us. For with the drums quieted, Bayo and the other whom obia had possessed could be treated by the older men who knew the way of obia, knew how to give them release from the spirit without doing harm to the village and its people.

On Bayo dragged himself, out of sight, and the other man was taken with him. Soon they called to us to come and see Bayo. He was being brought out of his seizure.

He was still on his hands and knees, and the saliva still dropped from his mouth. As we looked, an elder stooped over him and whispered some words in his ear. Taking the small wineglass we had brought for our present of rum for the dance, he poured a few drops of liquor in his eyes, then in his ears, and then brought the glass to his mouth.

787 Bayo's teeth closed with a snap, and the glass came away in the hands of the elder who had held it. A piece of glass remained in Bayo's mouth. Slowly, as we looked on, his mouth began to work. Would he swallow the piece of glass whole? Would he chew it into bits and then swallow it? We had heard of those whom Kromanti possessed who did this, but would Bayo?

He did not swallow it. Slowly the muscles of the mouth moved, and slowly the piece of glass appeared between his lips, then, slowly ejected, it fell to the ground.

The old man tried again to make him drink, this time giving him the liquor in a metal cup. When the cup was released, the marks of the boy's teeth were deeply imprinted on it.

In the clearing where the dancing had taken place, men and women stood about in little groups, excitedly talking. Obia had come without the proper preparation. Obia had come too soon—it had come too strong. Lucky for them that visiting obia men who knew how to control this strength were present, people who knew how to take violent men in the full strength of their violence and bring them to sanity by speaking magic words which obia listened to.

"Ah, Bak'a, it is good they were here. Obia came too strong. If the drums had not stopped, many would have been hurt, and our village would have mourned. When obia comes too soon, it is bad."

6

We were in our canoe, returning to the base camp. Two of the men who lived in the village where the dance had been held were paddling, and in the stern sat Bayo, a strange, strained, silent Bayo.

He had regained consciousness, for when we had asked him, "Are you ready to come back with us?" he had answered a hoarsely whispered "Ai." In the boat with us was the tumao drum, and as the two of us and Bayo sat silent, the paddlers gossiped about the events of the evening.

"OBIA COMES!"

787

Back at the camp, Bayo was exhausted. Tross, after his frantic welcome, had settled down and was lying near his master who sat on a box, leaning against one of the posts of the hut. We were alone with him and our servants. The Bush Negroes had left us at the shore. Bayo had strong obia, and his obia had obviously not been satisfied. Would the spirits seize him once more?

Wisdom dictated that we take ordinary precautions and, as Bayo sat there, we accounted for all the machetes and Bayo's shotgun and locked them in a canister.

Did he want water? No. Suddenly he roused himself, and we came to our feet. What was to happen now?

He strode over to the corner of the hut where the tumao drum stood, and, hoisting it on his shoulder, walked out of the hut. As we followed him, we could see him stop at the river bank and place the drum on the ground. He brought his hands down on the drumhead. A rhythm sounded. Was he signaling the village across the river that he had arrived safely? Was he speaking to the spirits that had just left him? The drumming left off as suddenly as it had started, and he came back and replaced the drum.

But he was not yet ready to go into his hammock and rest, and he stood against the doorway, his tired body gleaming in the light of the lanterns, his knees slightly flexed, arms spread wide over the side poles of the house, his hands grasping the wood.

"Will you go to your hammock, Bayo?"

"Ai," and our town man who had helped him there came back saying that he was already asleep.

"It is all over," we hazarded the opinion.

But our cook was of another mind.

"Massa," he said, "you can never tell when the spirit will come back. Do not sleep without the lantern. Let it stay lighted."

And so we slept with lighted lantern, while Bayo lay separated from us by a partition which did not reach above a man's head.

7

787 The next day was our last among the Saramacca people. Bayo came to us early to help with the packing. He was apparently none the worse for his seizure and, as he worked, we could tell from his manner how release had come to him and how the tension we had noticed the past few days had left him.

On his body were no marks. His mouth showed no cuts where the glass was bitten off and chewed. When we told him about the glass, he knew nothing of it. Had he not known about this eating of glass, he might well have doubted our word, for when we examined his lips and palate and tongue, not even a scratch showed.

"What did you drum last night, Bayo?"

"When, before the obia came to me?"

He remembered nothing after he had leaped from the improvised apinti to run into the bush.

"Not when you drummed apinti, but when you came back here and took the tumao to the river."

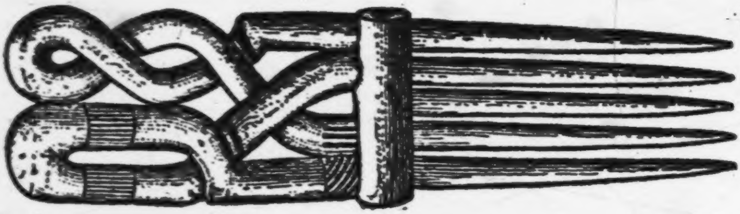
"I don't remember. Did I do that?"

8

609 789 Despite the early hour we had to leave in order to catch the weekly train for the coast, the boats of our friends began to be seen off the landing place as they came to say their farewells. The good woman Tita, whom they called 376 Mother Snake behind her back, was the first to arrive. 488 She walked slowly up from the river bank, pipe in mouth, a pot on her head, and one in each hand. The pots held obias which, she said, were made especially for us, to give us great powers in our own land—one to keep us safe from the ghosts of those we had wronged; one to guard us against the acts of the unfriendly living; one to make all those from whom we sought advantage "love" us.

123 Sedefo's younger wife came with her child on her back to 854 collect whatever tin cans were about, and some gift for the child when it wakened, knowing that something was

1/A



[412
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532]

Chapter Nine

MEDICINE AND MAGIC

NO one in Djuka land dies a natural death. Death is 754
caused by witchcraft. At Santi Gron on the Saramacca 764
River, preparations are being made for a burial. The whole village is excited. The women wailing are the relatives of the dead man. Children are crying because they see others crying. Unseen drums throb dully, making the hot air pulsate. The corpse lies in an open shed with only three walls—a death house (*dede oso*). Two girls of fifteen or sixteen are fanning it steadily to keep the flies away. The man died more than a week ago; all this time the body had been lying on a platform out in the tropical heat to decompose.

It is black magic that kills. Therefore the Bush Negroes 754
make an effort to find out who made the magic that killed 695
this man. An ancient ritual is employed. Three to ten days 787
the corpse is left unburied, and in the humid heat the flesh undergoes a partial liquefaction. The putrescent fluid is gathered in a calabash cup and carried around from door to door.

1/A [For caption, see category 116; p. 204.—Analyst]

754 Each person in the village goes through the motion of drink-
695 ing some of it. Should anyone refuse to do this, he is the
787 person who is guilty of inflicting death by witchcraft upon
the deceased.

The guilt is mainly ceremonial; but sometimes a penalty is attached to anyone's refusal to "drink." The liquid is not actually swallowed, but the calabash gourd is placed to the lips. The whole ritual is probably a folk-memory of the ancestral days when actual death was meted out to the man who worked black magic.

Another ceremony to find the guilty party may follow, especially if the first has not found him. The corpse on its platform is carried in procession through the paths of the village. Leading the procession are the obeiah men daubed with pemba dotee. Their faces are bisected vertically, one half covered with clay and the other half clean. Large crescents are drawn over each breast and over the belly. In the procession are the dead man's relatives. They are accompanied always by the booming drums. Four bucks carry the platform to the doorway of each hut, and pause there, or pause in the village clearing.

The obeiah men question the corpse: "Is this the house of the person who killed you?"

The four men bearing the body, which is supposedly possessed by the spirit of the dead, shake the platform, imparting a slight movement, a semblance of life, to the corpse. Meanwhile, buzzards and vultures, the uninvited guests, perch expectantly in the wall of jungle trees that surround

Saramaccaner
Aucaner

the village clearing. Flies and insects scurry. The body rolls 754
over toward the door of the hut: yes, this is the guilty one. 695
Or else it rolls away: no, he is innocent. The tomtoms boom 787
again, and the procession moves on to the next hut.

After winding about the town, the procession continues along a game trail back into the forest, where the white man is not allowed to follow. There, back in the bush, the body is perhaps buried to cheat the buzzards and vultures; but we are not sure. The dead person's hut is never occupied again; 768 neither is it repaired or demolished, but allowed, like the corpse, to decay.

Not for some time has the actual death penalty been inflicted 683 upon those suspected of killing their neighbours by witchcraft. However, this used to be the case among the Djukas—more especially among the Aucaners—and the ceremony surrounding the detection of the guilty party is probably a survival of the Tshi-speaking people of Africa. Today the punishment of one suspected of causing death takes a more moderate form. In fact, unless the guilty party had previously announced his intention of causing the death, the punishment is "left to God." Otherwise, the guilty one may be given a severe beating, but, if the culprit escapes to a neighbouring village, it is incumbent upon the captain of that village to give him asylum. This has been noted by Mr. E. Wong, head bush police official at Moengo. Men are sometimes ostracized from the village, and are left to gain a livelihood by their own resources at some lonely spot on the river.

The Djukas may be possessed by almost any spirit. During
776 the dances they sometimes feel Apuku or Cromanti, as the
● 787 case may be. Once a Bush Negro was possessed by the spirit
of a jaguar. The big buck seized a dog that happened to be loitering near by and tore it to pieces with his fingers. After a dance a man was seized by the spirit of a rebel leader of the old plantation days; he seized a cutlass and began hacking and smashing everything around him until the others forcibly restrained him.

776 The Bush Negroes do not worship the jungle spirits very
782 meticulously, but every village has fetishes, usually standing
[778] in little god-houses which are mere sheds to keep off the rain.
Under the shade of the tiny roof can be seen the stiff visage of one of these deities, at times with remnants of food and drink at his feet. Beside the food there is usually a paddle for the god to eat with, elaborately carved like any food-paddle, and smeared with pemba dotee, the sacred white clay. This clay is smeared on all religious or ceremonial objects. For the individual to hold profitable converse with the gods, he must be smeared with it; pemba dotee seems to be a sort of catalytic agent between the soul and the deity. This custom is a West African survival, and not to be found among the Indians of Dutch Guiana.

778 Along the river, also, are occasional shrines where the
782 Bush Negroes may appease their deities when on long journeys, or when hunting. The shrine consists of a tall pole which may be either festooned or plain. At the base of many of the poles are shells, stones, bottles, and pieces of wood, as well as food and drink, possibly as a sacrifice. Every village,

stituted a form of currency, *papa moni*. They come originally 778 751
from the East Indies, having been brought to both Africa and [177]
South America by Portuguese traders. When a savage takes a fancy to a thing, he will go to some trouble to get hold of it. Thus the tin cans of the Standard Oil Company have penetrated into almost every primitive community now known.

Projecting from the wrapped cord around Abaisa's boe is a bit of blue cloth to ward off the spirit of a dead enemy. A bit of red cloth blinds the wearer to evil sights and makes him serene. A small strand of white cloth provides protection from the bad spirits called *Bakru*. Underneath the cloth are bristles from the anteater to give strength. All these charms make the obeiah bracelet a powerful affair.

Another boe is used to foretell the future. It is similar to 778
the bracelet, but projecting from the wrapped cord is a short 787
bit of tubing. The device is suspended from a string and held motionless, the tube pointing toward the ground. When no air is stirring a question is asked concerning the future. If the pointer remains motionless the answer is "yes," but if it moves the reply is "no." In this simple way the Bush Negro acquires knowledge of coming events. Our tent boy had several questions he wanted to ask, and when they were answered he had "a peculiar feeling."

Another obeiah that we obtained is a jaguar-tooth neck- 778
lace. Strung on the same string with the pierced tooth are two little carved fetishes of Cromanti and Aflamu, crudely done. All religious articles are extremely crude in their carving, compared with the delicate tracery of Djuka implement

784 These food trafers are sometimes chosen by the individual,
262 and are acquired also by inheritance. A certain Bush Negro
[424 got his trafer in this way: His grandmother had a vision,
●787] called *papa winti,* and she informed her grandson that she
had been possessed. This made him feel the spirit of Cromanti.
In that bad state he got the *idée fixe* that shooting a
turtle would be reprehensible and dangerous. This animal
then became his tabooed food, and for the rest of his life it
is trafer so far as he is concerned.

* * *

797 So far only a slight attempt has been made to Christianize
the Djukas. The Catholics and Moravian Brothers have established
mission stations at a few points along the rivers.
Their efforts at conversion appear on the whole to be unsuccessful.
The Bush Negroes are converted in small numbers
and very superficially; in moments of stress they will revert
back to their jungle deities. The whole spirit of Christian
customs is foreign to their mode of life. They have the Gran
776 Gadu, an adequate enough image of divine power. Their
782 prayers are sometimes said directly to him, or they pray to
their ancestors to intercede with the Gran Gadu for aid.
Sometimes the prayer is said by being beaten out on the tomtom,
[778] for the tomtom is sacred, and the throbs of the great

755 the cock is able to stand up and crow the patient is said to be cured.

787 The killing of the white rooster and inspection of its bladder are performed also in order to foretell the future in other than healing situations. There are several methods of prophesying. In one of them a plank is supported on the heads of two men, and on it are placed various little bundles. A third man stands before the plank and asks questions while the men bearing the plank jump up and down. The Gadu (the spirit in the bundles) is supposed to reply with a yes or no, as indicated by the way the bundles on the plank move. The questions are put metaphorically and in such a way as to exclude the possibility of the plank bearers deliberately influencing the answers. After one man has asked several questions, the bearers run with the plank to another part of the village where further questions are put to it. The carrying
[763] of this plank seems to be the prerogative of certain individuals, and only certain others understand the making of the bundles and the correct placing of them.

778 Not even Mynheer Wolff, who has lived among the Bush Negroes for many years and undoubtedly commands their profound respect, has been permitted to enter Dahomey. The headman or captain of Dahomey, interestingly enough, is named Songai. There is a district on the West Coast of Africa still known today as Songhay. The name is the remnant of a great Negro empire that once flourished in North-West Africa, near the Sahara Desert. This empire is thought to have had universities and astronomical observatories, wealth

174 many of these brave and hardy blacks, who rebelled in Jamaica, Haiti, and elsewhere, as well as in Surinam. This intractable and high-spirited nature still characterizes the contemporary Bush Negro, who has the same hardihood, the same impatience of control, that marked the wild Coromantis of the early revolts. They may have been slaves in fact, but they were never slaves in spirit.

The name of these fractious slaves is not unfamiliar; we have encountered it in contemporaneous Bush Negro life. [776] *Cromanti* now designates a god of the South A[illegible]an bush. The name has apparently travelled from one continent to another, from a Dutch slave factory of the seventeenth century to the Bush Negro villages of the twentieth. Today there are "fetishes to the bad, wild god Cromanti."

776 174 In the person of Cromanti, the Djukas have obviously deified their own ancestors. The bad, wild god of the bush is to be identified with the Bush Negroes' Coromantyn forbears. The dancers smeared with sacred clay, whose mad gyrations [787] with whistling bush-knives signified that they were possessed by the spirit of Cromanti, were reincarnations of the rebels of the old days. The Djukas' bad demon of the forest is an atavistic memory, personifying the spirit of the uprisings.

/12 cont./

796 273 Then they call all the neighbors together to take part in the festivities to be held, which consist of invoking their gods amidst continuous dancing and excessive drinking.

[147] They begin the festivities only on a Friday and usually finish on a Sunday or Monday, depending on the larger or smaller supply of drink, so, lacking this, the festival ends. After the conclusion they are usually extremely tired and listless and give themselves up entirely to rest for at least two or three days.

[782] It is a definite requirement at these festivities to be very amply supplied with strong drink, because one must drink without interruption in order to remain in a continuous narcosis. With each drink they first pour a little on the ground, -- so that it, too, on which they find themselves so gay, may participate in their enjoyment.

[262] [577] The merrymakers then take care that they will by no means be lacking in fish, wild game, bacon, rice, etc., since it is a matter of honor with them to display the most lavish hospitality on such occasions.

776 The gods that they worship are:

Loango Gado,
Papa Gado,
Cromantie Gado,

/13/ names certainly derived from the various African tribes of these names.

● [787] In the first two they glorify nature and everything created, from which it therefore appears that these are merely subordinate gods of the unnamed, single great spirit. The last is above all regarded by them as the mediator who transmits their wishes to the great spirit; he is invoked especially at burial ceremonies and for consultation in connection with serious illnesses.

796 [771] [132] [783] They do not have any other cult or religion, so far as I was able to discover, but only the fixed habit of still celebrating together and with their chief and captains on the first Friday of the new moon in the month of October or November, after the long dry period has set in for good, a great feast that has as its goal a general atonement, to cleanse them of the misdeeds that they have committed.

/17 cont./

765 [538] In these tales, called anansitori (spider-head story), the spider usually plays the main role as a personal being.

The close female relatives wear as a sign of mourning for husband, father, and mother, for a year, white or blue cloths around the head and a white cloth around the body. The men wear a white cloth around head and body only for three months, but during an entire year (since they then may not go completely clothed) they cover themselves with only a black loincloth. They also refrain from wearing ornaments for a whole year.

766 If one of them dies in the working place, in the town, or elsewhere, then the corpse has some hair shorn from its forehead and is subsequently buried without ceremonies. This hair is wrapped in a new piece of linen or cotton and brought to Auca, or their permanent dwelling place, where it then undergoes a proper burial, on which occasion all the customary ceremonies are observed as though the corpse were there.

766 ● 787 [824] Whenever one of them dies suddenly or from a strange disease, which can arouse a suspicion of poisoning, immediately after death and before being washed the corpse is placed in a boesipapaja (1) tree (which, split and then tied together, is just like a halved hollow tree) at least five feet long. This kind of coffin is carried from east to west, past all those present, who for this purpose must be ranged in two rows, by two completely strange and impartial men, who are invited from other places for this purpose.

Now the place where the corpse through heavy pressure on the /18/ head forces the two bearers to stand still is where the inquiry begins, and one asks the corpse whether this place where they are now standing still is where clarification can be provided. If one notices a distinct movement of the hollowed-out tree, this is corroboration. If, after the question has been repeated three

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1. It is a hollow tree of very soft and unusable wood which, when split open, resembles bamboo from the inside; the leaves are broad and rasp-like.

/18 cont./

766 times, no noticeable movement has been observed, the answer is
787 negative, and one proceeds with the corpse all the way to the
end of the crowd ranged on either side. Everyone endeavors to
be present on such occasions in order not to cast any blame upon
himself or to arouse suspicion.

/ If, however, the answer is in the affirmative, then one asks
whether the right person or a close relative of his is here; if the
answer to this is also affirmative, one proceeds to inquire about
the degree of blood relationship until one has finally discovered who
the actual person is. Since this happens in the presence of so
many persons as witnesses, it is regarded as valid proof, and the
corpse is buried. However incomprehensible and impossible this
may appear, this procedure is nonetheless actually practiced con-
[123] stantly among the Bush Negroes. I have been an eyewitness
several times.

695 A few days later the person indicated, in case he was not
[693] present at the above-mentioned inquiry, is tracked down, if
necessary fetched forcibly, and brought before the governor or the
chief, who questions him in the presence of the captains or the
council members. In case of denial, he is offered something to
drink, which, however, he will not accept if he is guilty, since
it has become apparent that whoever drinks it with a pounding or
uneasy heart frequently manifests immediate symptoms, such as
[681] vomiting, swelling, chlorosis, and so forth. If the person has
been prepared to brave this (in spite of the conviction of his mis-
deed), he is put to death by means of the most horrible and unheard-
tortures, whereas in the case of confession he is forced with the
whip to reveal whom else he has poisoned during his life.

696 All the relatives of the poisoned person are then called in
682 order to be present at the punishment and to pull on his ears
with all possible force by means of a pair of pincers, one after
[262] another. Subsequently a bowl with pinda blaf is set before him,
in which a turtle must be boiled, as well as a tomtom made of ripe
bananas. All this, after all, is regarded as the tastiest food. He
is then /19/ again severely beaten with a whip, whereupon he must
eat what has been prepared for him, and immediately afterwards

/66 cont./

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554 The small, recently founded lineages attached to a lo each designate a head: for example, the Afi lineage has Awéni as head. But this head remains subject to the authority of the captain of the lo and his office has no official existence.

/67/ The appointment is made by a council - kuutu - of the lineage, but it is not valid until endorsed by the grand man.

●[787] When the deceased captain did not, while living, designate any successor, his yɔrka is interrogated in order to know whom he prefers. That does not have the force of law but can influence the council.

The council meets several days after the end of mourning for the deceased captain. All the male members of the lineage, regardless of age, give their opinion. Strictly speaking, they do not vote; but the nomination is considered valid only if three-quarters of those present are in agreement. If not, they disband without having decided anything, and the lineage can remain without a head for years. On this topic can be cited the example of the Awara Bakka lo, which remained without a head from 1935 (?) to 1953, until the appointment of Konduku. During this time the [643] grand man had designated Captain Popo, head of the Lapé lineage, to secure the interim. As for the religious functions, they were taken care of by the doyen of the lineage.

The captain has the following functions within the lineage:

1) He is priest of the ancestor worship and presides over [793] the prayers and offerings made before the fraga tiki. In this duty [769] he is replaced in case of absence by the oldest man of the lineage.

In case of the death of a member of the lineage from the [761] effect of the kunu, the captain convokes all his people in order [782] to proceed to collective prayers and offerings intended to appease the gods;

/69 cont./

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[171] It is assumed once and for all that women are shrews on whom one cannot count and from whom one can get nothing. The Refugee Blacks are inexhaustible on this subject and their opinion about the women of their group is very similar to that of Africans in general: they call them ill-natured, devoid of feeling, selfish, greedy, and unfaithful.

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[965] In general, women are held apart from regular social life; no form of customary society of women exists. In the mourning ceremonies, which correspond to a veritable mobilization of the village, they play no role, except to prepare the meals.

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787
794 Yet the women play indirectly an important role in the social life by way of the cults of possession. The Papa gadu gods so formidable have women nearly exclusively as bearers, and we shall see in studying the functioning of the kunu that they are the principal actors in this. Through this activity, which is exerted in arbitrary fashion on the outskirts of the institutions of regular social life, the women maintain around themselves an atmosphere of fear; it is not impossible that the functioning of these cults is influenced by the concern of the women to maintain their privileged position in the society of the Refugee Blacks.

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157 Many women are charitable and have a certain generosity toward the members of their family, insuring the maintenance of the old men without resources. But their benevolence is essentially subjective and extends only to a small circle of personal friends and their nearest relatives. As soon as the elders appeal to them for a question of general interest, claiming to give them orders or even advice, they meet an attitude systematically malevolent and stubborn. /70/

[613] The lineage heads avoid giving them orders directly, for they run a strong risk of getting themselves insulted, as we have observed many a time.

/*121 cont.*/

843 Sexual relations continue during the whole pregnancy,
[827] for they are reputed to be indispensable for the formation of the mind of the child, which is thought to come from the father; also, for a man whose wife is pregnant there can be no question of abandoning her nor even of leaving for a long trip without the permission of the head of her lineage.

843 *Forecasting of the birth*. Divinatory rituals are carried out from
787 the first months of pregnancy to forecast whether the childbirth will be easy or not. For that one goes to an old man who "knows" one of these remedies. There are several: one consists in making a small hole in the center of a cross outlined on the ground, pouring into it a decoction of magic herbs kept secret, and putting an egg into it. The remedy-master then says: "If the childbirth is to be easy, the egg must be crushed as soon as my foot bears down /*122*/ on it." They state that sometimes the egg resists crushing: from this they deduce that the delivery will be difficult.

844 When the time for delivery arrives, concern is centered
on the danger of maleficent human entities, *ɔgi sani*, which
try to become incarnate in the child. The woman is shut up in
[789] the house, all of its exits are blocked off, and *ɔbiaman* are
called to perform rites of protection all around the house. If
[845] delivery is difficult, that is attributed to the fact that one of
these entities succeeded in getting into the house in spite of
the precautions taken.

The *ɔbiaman* are called to "wash" the woman with the help of appropriate remedies.. Only in serious cases are men
846 allowed to enter the house. As a general rule, during the first
602 eight days only women related to the mother may enter. (Care is even taken as far as possible to get as midwife (*mena*) an old woman related to the mother.)

/138 cont./

613 In general, one can say that the law of exogamy is main-
614 tained firmly within the fractions which know completely their genealogy. Union between classificatory "brothers" and "sisters" belonging to different fractions remains always prohibited in principle, but as for all the institutions of the Refugee Blacks, the prohibition ceases to be observed if fear of suprahuman sanctions weaken. /139/

This is what explains the difference in attitude among the
[784] lineages. In the Awara Bakka lineage, people do not remember that marriages between fractions may have been followed by maladies or misfortunes, and for this reason they are no longer feared.

In the Kotika lineage it was the same, but an event which
[789] took place in 1958 threw consternation. A young woman, Awini (K1, E37, Boniville), died suddenly, and divination showed that
[784] she had been struck down by the *kunu* for having married her
[761] classificatory brother Sintamann (K3, E145, Boniville). However, they belonged to two different fractions and their common relationship was the farthest removed possible in the lineage (tenth-degree relatives).

684 688 784 *Pikadu*. The offense against exogamy, *pikadu* (1), incest in the broad sense, is considered an offense against society and against religious law; it exposes the lineage to the vengeance of the gods who exercise the *kunu* on it. But in the thought of the Refugee Blacks, if incest unleashes the functioning of existing *kunu*, it
[114] does not create new ones. What has been written on this subject by several authors seems inexact to us, at least for the Boni.
[761] In the example put forth above Awini's death was attributed to the *kunu* brought to bear for a long time by the *yɔrka* of a man assassinated in former times by a member of the lineage.

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1. This word appears to come from the Portuguese *pecado*, sin.

/161 cont./

764 692 This tribunal is charged with establishing the causes of death and rendering a decision on this subject which has the force of law. But it is above all charged with judging the dead person, with determining whether he has lived worthily, whether he has the right to be buried according to the rites and to be invoked as an ancestor, or whether on the contrary he was a wisimi.

[613] [645] The grand man designates one or two lineage heads to preside over the council and "command" the dead person until the burial.

The grand man designates who will lead the assemblage and will "command" the dead person until the burial.

764 692 613 This cannot be the head of the dead person's lineage, for no one can at the same time be judge and judged.

Ex.:	for Béniti (Dju) this was Popo	head of the Lapé lo
	for Atikati (Dju) it was Kondoku	head of the Awara Bakka lo
	for Kotoïda (Aw.B.) it was Tafanié	head of the Papaïston lo
	for Way (Dip. II) it was Tafanié	--

/162/

764 787 The 2nd and 3rd days after the death are given over to the interrogation of the dead person, which on the evening of the first day had scarcely begun.

[184] The rites of this interrogation vary from one village to another; in certain villages they begin to carry the dead man even before the construction of the coffin; the questions are not asked everywhere in the same fashion.

[171] The dead person is interrogated by methods widespread in West Africa and which are related to spiritualism: the coffin is carried on the heads of two men, feet forward. The dead man is supposed to push the bearers forward to say yes, and to make them nod their heads from left to right to say no.

/162 cont./

764 767 [613] In principle the forward bearer (who is called bossman by analogy with a boat) must belong to the dead person's lineage. Apart from this restriction, the bearers can be (and are in fact) any people whatever, the only condition required being that they be extremely vigorous, because the load they carry is at the limit of their strength.

Fraud can exist in isolated cases, but in the great majority of cases there is no doubt as to the good faith of the bearers; they give contradictory answers, go ahead and back interminably, until, exhausted, they are raised up again by others. Actually, the interpretation of these automatic movements does not differ essentially from any process of divination.

The dead person is interrogated from the age of four or [766] five years up. If it is a very young child, he is not interrogated; but the causes of his death are sought by interrogating possessed people, and if there is reason to, the kunu is appeased in the same fashion.

764 789 754 At the beginning of the interrogation the tribunal tries to make sure that the dead person was not a wisimã. After sending the bearers to the other end of the village, the president of the assemblage has two young men hidden in huts; then he has the bearers called, saying to the dead person: "I have lost So-and-so and So-and-so, find them." If the dead person was an upright man, he must have acquired a suprahuman clairvoyance permitting him to direct his bearers straight away toward the huts in question. If he was a wisimã, he will be as if blind; his bearers go wandering in vain from hut to hut.

They state that this test always succeeds.

764 789 761 [776] [784] The interrogation proceeds interminably. The causes of death are taken up. The first question is: is it a god who killed you? The answer is nearly always yes, and they proceed by elimination in order to arrive, for example, at learning that it is an Ampuku, that it is the Ampuku borne by So-and-so. By what the kunu was set in motion, how to appease it, is not the

764 /162 cont./
787 business of the tribunal. The people of the dead person's lineage
761 will have to settle that among themselves after the obsequies.
[784] The role of the tribunal is to make official the cause of death
and give it the force of law.

764 Then the inheritance is taken up in the presence of the
787 near relatives of the dead man. The questions are asked suc-
428 cessively: "To whom dost thou leave thy boat...?" "To whom
dost thou leave thy gun (1)...?" The coffin moves each time

1. That, unless the dead man has, before his death, in front of witnesses, formally indicated the apportionment of his belongings; in such a case, questions are asked only for the objects whose attribution had not been clearly specified.

toward one of the people present. /Figs. 22 and 23 appear here/

764 /163/ At the end of the third day after the death the
[789] burial is prepared; the dead person is asked from daybreak on
whether he is ready for that; if not it can be postponed until the
next day.

[767] The [illegible] have been working at the cemetery since the
beginning of the day. They are young and strong men who have
[827] to work slowly, for not a drop of sweat may fall into the grave
or their akka would risk remaining prisoner in it.

About 4:00 P.M. the bearers promenade the dead person
one last time in the village for a supreme adieu. The near
[534] relatives go to the wharf. The dead man is hoisted into a canoe
[775] while the apinti drum calls his yorka so that it will not remain
in the village.

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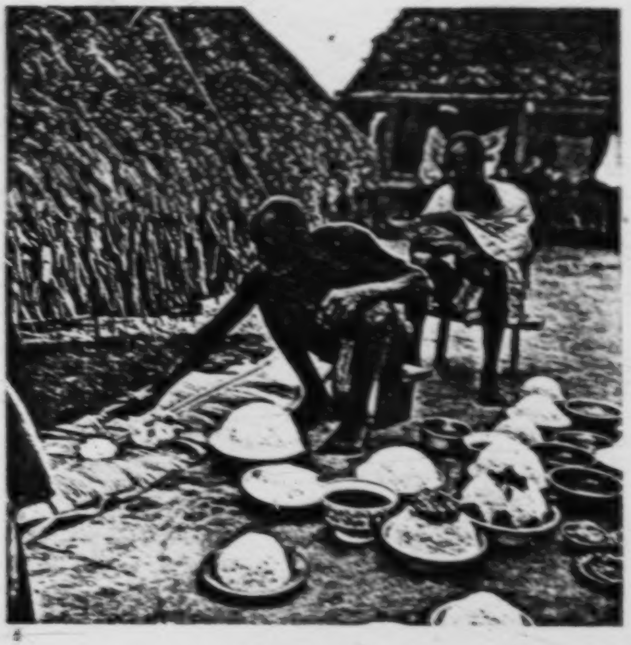

Fig. 22. Offering of food to the ancestors.

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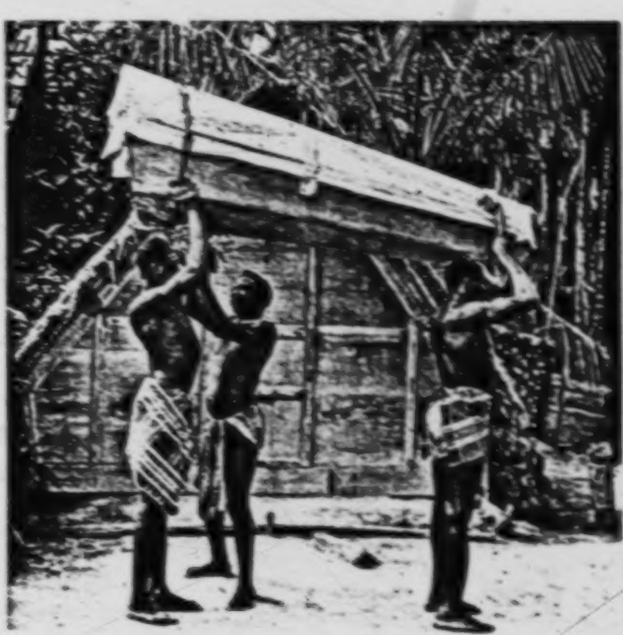
Fig. 23. Interrogation of the dead person.



/163 cont./

764 About 5:00 P.M. the coffin arrives at the cemetery wharf and is given over to the ɔlɔmĩ. No other rite is carried out. It is placed at the bottom of the grave; a layer of round logs separates it from the pile of earth which is put back on top. The burial is finished about six o'clock.

Notes taken at the burial of Way in Kormotibo (January 25, 1957) (1st day after death).

I arrive in Kormotibo at nine o'clock. There are two dead people in the village: Sokodo, 37 years old, who is to be buried the next day, and Way, 65, who died in Maripasoula and whose body was transported the day before.

764 787 [892] [822] When we moored, I noticed at the south end of the village the bearers of Sokodo's coffin, alone and immobile. Arriving near the mortuary shed, I find Captain Kondoku, who presides over the lãnti kuutu, and Captain Poopu, head of the village. Kondoku tells me that he is in the act of proceeding to a new test on Sokodo; he has just had two young men hidden, M... and G..., and the dead man is called upon to find them without hesitation.

I look around us. There is nobody nearby; a few women are attending to their occupations, indifferent to a scene observed many a time. It seems as though Kondoku is doing that for himself alone.

The coffin-bearers appear, coming from the other end of the village. Without hesitation they go toward the mortuary shed, enter it, and the end of the coffin stops before the hammock covered with a large mosquito net spread to the ground, where Way's widower, the Saramaka Gamba, is seated.

To my great surprise I see two young men go out. Nothing revealed their presence under the hammock, and Kondoku, who was talking with me, has neither said nor done anything which could direct the bearers. Nobody present could have

/163 cont./
764 given any indication whatever. Besides, how would he have
787 had time to make himself understood by two men walking
at top speed, crushed by their heavy load and looking straight
ahead?

This upsets all the ideas I had formed about this test. The only hypothesis that remains is that the bearers have been "tipped off" by the man who went to get them (an old man of the council). But is it possible that such a crude fraud could be current practice? The Boni are far from being stupid, they are ever suspicious /164/ and they are too talkative for such deceptions not to be laid bare by their perpetrators themselves.

Under these conditions, how can it operate--this collective suggestion which explains most of the rites of the Refugee Blacks? I can't explain it to myself.

764 Manufacture of the Coffin. The kisimã are gathered
767 around a pile of boards. They are about 15 in number,
commanded by Boofo, head of the kisimã of Asisi, and Aténi
322 (Asisi-Dipélu II). A pile of boards is at their feet; some work
[412] with a small hand saw, others with an adze; the fitting is
done with a machete. /Fig. 21 appears here./

They take measurements with a graver. The bottom board is cut first, then the front and back ends. The outline of the back end, in the shape of a truncated diamond, results from a rather complex construction with the compass which I have not time to report.

764 The work is done noisily in an atmosphere of crude farce.
767 The whole time it lasts, the kisimã exert veritable command
[152] over the village. The coconut trees of Kormotibo are pillaged
for their benefit. The village women prepare the rice for
[262] the meal which must, according to custom, be offered to
them upon finishing the coffin about noon.

/166 cont./

764 medium of two round logs. This ritual seems to have as its
767 purpose restricting the defilement of death for the village.).

The body is put back down in the deepest silence, with the greatest care, into the coffin. A pillow is put under the head.

[152] Those present show no emotion. The widower, the Saramaka Gamba, who has remained seated in his hammock since morning, turning his back to his wife's body, does not stir.

The kisimã bring the edges of the pieces of cloth back over the body and put on, in addition, a few camisas of the ordinary kind. Before the upper wings of the coffin are put in place, one of them gently removes the wads of cotton which had been put in the dead woman's nostrils.

Then the upper wings of the coffin are nailed down, always according to the same rite, blows struck in cadence with pieces of wood accompanying the hammer blows.

[692] The role of the kisimã is ended; they give over the dead woman to the council, lãnti kuutu, charged with judging her.

764 Search for the Causes of Death. The ceremony begins
787 about four o'clock in the greatest confusion, as is usual among the Refugee Blacks; it is impossible to understand who is really a member of the council and who is not a member, everybody talking at once.

I think I understand that the grand man has designated Captains Kondoku (Asisi-Awara Bakka) and Tafanié (Papaïston) to preside over the ceremony. In fact, it is neither the one nor the other who begins the interrogation, but a man from Papaïston village, Agodéba, a venerable old man whose torso is molded in a deplorably shoddy jersey calling to mind a rugby match.

/166 cont./

764 The coffin is placed at the edge of the mortuary shed,
787 the front turned toward the spectators. Agodéba sits down be-
fore the front of the coffin. According to ceremony, he enters
into contact with the /167/ yɔrka of the dead woman by pour-
ing water on the ground before the coffin and calling her by
764 name. He says the same sentences several times in different
787 forms: "Thou hast lived here ... thou hast had children in this
761 village; now death has killed thee. Thou must tell us who
killed thee."

[292] Two men, B... (L'Enfant Perdu, Dipélu I) and A... (Asisi-Awara Bakka) come forward, gird their loins with a camisa, and, aided by several others, lift the coffin. B..., who is of the dead woman's lineage, takes the forward position.

For about ten minutes the two bearers try to put themselves into a state of passivity permitting them to receive fitly the promptings of the dead woman; no question whatever is asked. They are seen to make contradictory movements, to go forward tilting the coffin from left to right, which means yes and no at the same time. Sometimes a sudden impulse appears to draw them far from the spectators, they are seen going from hut to hut, wheeling around, going away again.

Finally they come back. Agodéba asks: "Is it a god who struck thee down?" The answer seems to be yes. "Is it a Papa gadu, an Ampuku, a Kãntasasu?" Contradictory answers, the people present lean toward the negative.

Agodéba continues: "Is it a yɔrka who killed thee?" Confused and contradictory movements of the coffin. Agodéba begins again: "Is it a god?" Someone among those present shouts: "Don't you see that she meant yes, speaking of the yɔrka? Agodéba gets angry, takes his hat, and leaves the meeting. General hubbub. Half an hour of words, broken by various movements and sham exits, is required in order to bring him to take his place again.

/167 cont./

764 787 761 The bearers are changed and the interrogation continues, still as confused as before. Captain Tafanié, who arrives in the midst of all this, thinks that the dead woman does not want to speak in front of such a large crowd. He asks her to designate which of the people present will form a small group. I see the front of the coffin stop in front of an old Saramaka named Yasu, then successively in front of about ten of those present of various ages and origins. They stand up, take their little benches in their hands, and go to join Tafanié under a large tree in a spot to the side; the interrogation resumes; by nightfall a sure fact has been established: Way was killed by a god. They will resume the next day in order to find out what god is concerned and how to appease him.

764 [114] Notes taken at the funeral ceremonies for Kotoïda (Aïi lineage) October 22-23, 1956 (2nd and 3rd days after death).

I arrive at Asisi on the 22nd at eight o'clock. Kotoïda died on the twentieth; the first part of the ceremony has been finished.

[692] It is Tafanié, head of Papaïston village, who presides over the lãnti kuutu.

Tafanié himself has directed the making of the coffin (he is a kisimã) with the help of boards held in reserve on the spot. The work was finished at nine o'clock in the morning.

The body was placed in the coffin immediately, and after the presentation of the pieces of cloth, the wings were nailed. /168/

When I arrive at the wharf, the coffin is placed in the mortuary shed. The near relatives of the deceased (sons, daughters, and nephews) as well as the husband and the co-wife compelled to take part in the mourning are seated in their hammocks attached to the posts of the shed. The first-mentioned manifest no apparent sorrow whatever. Husband and

/168 cont./

764 co-wife, on the contrary, are completely veiled and show by
their state of prostration the keenest sorrow. Each of them is
assisted by a female relative who supports them when they have
to move somewhere else, for they are supposed to be too overcome to move alone.

764 The interrogation as to the causes of death has already
787 taken place the day before, but Tafanié proclaims, in front of
761 me, the result of it to the latest arrivals: the deceased was
struck down by a yɔrka which pursues the lineage with its kunu.
She had already received several warnings in the form of illness;
the yɔrka had demanded a payment which she and her near
relatives had neglected to furnish. Impossible to learn anything
further before being able to interrogate this yɔrka, whose
habitual bearer has left for Saint-Laurent. It is necessary to wait
for his return in order to mollify the yɔrka's anger.

764 About ten o'clock the members of the lãnti kuutu go to-
769 ward the fraga tiki of the Awara Bakka lo, in front of which they
778 all sit down on their stools. I notice that not a single man of
[613] the dead person's lineage appears in the front row. In it I
recognize Popo (Lapé), Poopu (Dipélu II, Kormotibo), Tafanié
(Papaïston). The one who is speaking is a foreigner passing
through, a very aged and respected Djuka.

[782] The elders invoke Masa Gadu and the ancestors in general,
asking them to protect them from adversity in the future; then
the offering of water and tafia takes place (no cane juice). I
notice that a little is poured on each of the secondary fraga tiki
erected for the sake of each one of the ancestors who pursue
another lineage with their kunu. That lasts about a quarter of
an hour.

764 Next someone goes to ask the deceased to whom she
787 bequeaths the Papa gadu god which manifested itself in her;
776 for the gods are bequeathed like the rest of the inheritance,
428 even if those concerned are divinities which exercise the kunu
424

/168 cont./

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against the lineage. The god ratifies this legacy or not; in general it follows, they say, the wishes of its bearer and manifests itself some time afterward in the designated heir.

The coffin is placed on the heads of two men: Tafanié puts the questions with authority. He begins first by making sure of the passivity of the bearers, invites the dead woman to push their heads forward to say yes, to give them an impulse from right to left to say no.

The coffin advances and draws back several times; its weight is at the limit of what the two men can support. Two secondary bearers help the rear bearer, preventing the coffin from falling.

[613]
[621]
1. /Footnote at bottom of p. 168; no reference to it on the page/ Let us recall that this lineage, too few in numbers to constitute a separate social unit, lives with the Awara Bakka, with whom it has no connection through kinship or alliance.

The dead woman suddenly leads her bearers across the village. We see it come back /169/ a quarter of an hour afterward, accompanied by a woman of about 35 years, Moni, in front of whom it stopped.

Tafanié asks whether it wishes to leave its god to her; the dead woman confirms. Upon the statement of this legacy Moni's face reflects no gladness at all, nor any fear.

They explain to me that the designated heiress can in no way refuse this legacy. She must immediately begin her instruction given by a teacher, in order to become a suitable bearer. The expenses of her instruction are borne by her lineage.

764 /169 cont./
787 They will be paid when the gita has been "arranged," that is,
776 has lost the bestial character of the beginning and when the god
428 can express itself in intelligible fashion.

There and then they busy themselves with transferring
764 the god out of the body of the deceased. An ɔbiaman well
787 known in the cult of the Papa gadu, Goutu (Dju) and his pupil
789 Balan (Aw.B.) come with calabashes containing infusions of
leaves. Four or five women having a Papa gadu come and line up behind them. The heiress, with an extremely vexed air, takes her place among them, clothed with the emblems of the god of the dead woman; they are going to call their gods who will dance in honor of Kotoïda's god.

The ɔbiaman and his pupil for several minutes trickle the infusion of herbs over the coffin, using packets of herbs like sponges, then they "wash" the women, including the postulant; he gives them the rest of the calabash to drink. One of the women, Samabun, falls immediately to the ground, attacked by the lowest form of possession: she drags herself on her belly like a snake (these are the first forms of the gita when it has not yet been "arranged." In her case that has lasted four years, contrary to what ordinarily happens. The scene was certainly anticipated, for she had put on European panties. The other women also drink but are not possessed; they leave to dress for dancing.

[534] The agida drum taken out of the god's chapel begins to beat, accompanied by two apinti.

The female bearers of Papa gadu arrive at the sound of the agida, smeared with pɛmba and carrying /wearing?--Tr./ the insignia of the god. Six come in all. They are not in a state of possession; only two will reach it. The first possessed woman keeps crawling on the ground, gropingly approaching the drum which she embraces, lying on her back. It is torn away from her. The ɔbiaman continue to come to "wash"

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/169 cont./
her from time to time in order to help the god to manifest itself. The crowd presses around the women dancers who execute the greatest variety of figures. At times they embrace each other two by two in the Boni manner. The onlookers jump for joy.

The scene lasts about half an hour, then, at the signal given by one of them, the possessed ones scatter and begin to run through the village: this is the moment for the gods to pay the musicians. Each person rushes to hide his belongings, for the gods will steal anything in the village without anyone being able to prevent them: this is their way of paying.

Soon the possessed women come back, putting down at the feet of the musicians a heap of incongruous objects: /170/ calabashes, cloth, paddles, etc., which their owners come to recover by means of bottles of beer and eggs. Then the women who were truly possessed come back to their normal state and all go home.

This dance was not a success; those present think that it is because the women bearers had drunk tafia, which the Papa gadu detest.

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Inheritance. The dead woman is asked to whom she bequeaths her clearings. She answers: "To her family," this being understood because the bearers move parallel to the people present without designating anybody. Under these conditions the property must be distributed (Kotoïda having no children) among her classificatory nephews. Actually, the plantations still farmable will go to Samabun, her sister's daughter.

[591]
Inheritance of the house does not come up, for the dead woman lived in her husband Empalé's house.

The boat is left to Samabun.

Held back are the personal objects, money, jewelry, fabrics. When the mourning is lifted, the eldest of the surviving brothers or sisters in the classificatory sense will make the distribution among the near relatives.

/171 cont./

764 The women who had come to carry the food of the ɔlɔmã go away, their work finished. Only two of them, not especially old, remain.

●[787] We arrive on a little separated space where a last interrogation takes place. It is Antonu, head of the ɔlɔmã of Asisi who speaks, while Tansia (Dipélu I) and Tyolo (Dju), basia or party-head of the ɔlɔmã of Asisi serve as bearers.

764 787 The dead woman is asked for instructions as to the choice of the men she designates as busimã (hunters, fishermen), intended to procure the food for the guests on the day of the broko dɛ. The coffin advances successively toward six men. Each one of these asks: "Is it really I?" I see the forward bearer, his eyes strangely fixed, nod in their direction.

764 At four o'clock we arrive in front of the grave, about 100 meters from the riverside. It is dug with neat edges; it is about 2 meters deep, 2 meters 50 long, and 1 meter wide. It has the trapezoidal shape of the coffin.

A bench is cut in half with a blow of the machete to make two supports placed in the bottom of the grave.

The coffin is lowered to the bottom by means of the cloth ropes which enclosed it. These ropes are then pulled back up. Several shots are fired. Not a word is spoken. About ten thick round logs about 20 centimeters in diameter are placed side by side on the grave and the earth thrown over them. The ɔlɔmã work with the shovel and hoe; the pile of earth rapidly reaches a meter in height.

Then the head of the ɔlɔmã stops the work. He passes over the grave several times, jumping with feet together. Next, passing the bundle of cloth ropes several times around his legs, he addresses the akka of those present, admonishing them not to stay in the hole.

/172 cont./

764 Suddenly an incident erupts. Baafu (Lapé) insinuates that
578 Agidibon (Aw.B.) is helping himself immoderately. Insulting
words are exchanged. Agidibon leaves the council. General
commotion. The tumult calms down after a quarter of an hour.

764 The speaker now thanks the foreigners passing through, Saramaka and Djuka, who helped at the obsequies.

764 Someone puts down on the ground a paddle on which is
● 787 attached a bundle wrapped in cloth. It is the dead woman's
paddle, and the bundle contains her hair. It is kept until the
[765] broko dɛ (it seems, in fact, that this is the reason for this
celebration) in order to keep contact with the dead woman's
yɔrka for the further questions people might have to ask it (1).

1. It seems that on this point custom envisages especially the case of near relatives of the dead person traveling on the river at the time of the death, and who could not be present at the burial.

Then, several ɔlɔmã will go to the cemetery to bury the bundle inside the mound.

The spectators go toward a shaded spot, for it is near noon and the sun is overwhelming.

Sosoman carries the front of the paddle and Tansia the back. Without any question at all being asked, they circulate in the village for a long time. Several times I see them make contradictory movements, nod their heads forward and sideways at the same time.

Here they are back again near Tafanié. To my great surprise Tafanié asks questions in a low voice, cupping his hands in front of his mouth.

/172 cont./

764 Several times the paddle is seen to answer affirmatively,
● 787 then negatively. Not one of those present can understand what
is said, but not one shows impatience or doubt.

[613] Suddenly Tafanié orders his assistants to cut rods: the dead woman has asked that the people of her own lineage be beaten, guilty of having neglected the yɔrka's warnings. On seeing these preparations the people of Kotoïda's lineage /173/ run away in confusion in every direction while their adversaries pursue them with the appearance of having a very good time. Some take refuge in the water, others in the bush; none whatever can be caught.

Completely symbolic punishment, moreover, for at the end of ten minutes they are seen to reappear and take their places again among those present.

764 The obsequies are ended. Only the deceased's near relatives stay seated in their hammocks under the mortuary shed. They will remain there until the broko dɛ.

764 Payments of the ɔlɔmã. The ɔlɔmã divide up one lot of
767 cloth, keeping track of what they have received in the preceding
obsequies. That does not appear to cause any discussion. If, after this, someone who has not furnished any work wants to take one of these pieces of cloth, he may do so by offering tafia to the people present.

766 Funeral ceremonies for people who die while traveling. If a
787 man dies in the course of a distant trip, they take from the
775 cadaver before burying it his hair and fingernails, which are
brought back to his native village; in fact, it is assumed that as long as a fragment of the body is not buried, the yɔrka remains attached to it; hair and fingernails will therefore permit the interrogation of the yɔrka and will be buried in the cemetery with the usual rites.

/178 cont./

765 He may not walk around stripped to the waist and bareheaded; Alémin used to wear permanently a horrible jersey and a holey beret.

765 He may neither dance nor sing (even alone). If he has a
● 787 *gadu*, this *gadu* is called and invited not to go to the head of its "master" for the duration of mourning. The *doyen* of the lineage of the party concerned pronounces this adjuration.

However, a reservation exists. If someone absolutely needs to consult this god, the widower is asked to remove his mourning clothing and put on his own clothes for a few hours. The consultation takes place in private inside a hut; then the mourning resumes.

765 He observes the basic interdiction (*bwasi kina*) of the dead woman in addition to his own.

He must absolutely spend the *yali* festival (New Year's Day) with the dead woman's family.

Such are the principal obligations and interdictions which rule over the life of a man in mourning, during a period of at least 18 months, which may even be prolonged up to two years and more (at the end of 1958 the mourning for Yundu, † in May, 1957, was still not lifted, and Alémin did not expect to be freed from it before the spring of 1959).

These obligations are aggravated still more during the first three months by special provisions. /179/

During these first three months, the *dipi baaka* or deep mourning, the man in mourning must keep an attitude of the most acute sorrow. He leaves the house assigned to him only for indispensable work, and does not go away from the dead woman's village; he remains with his eyes lowered, not looking directly at anyone except members of the dead woman's family. Usage used to require him to lean on a stick like an exhausted person, but the present grand man has abolished that custom.

765 /184 cont./

[202] "You who with ɔbia so that the machete will not cut you, so that the broken glass will not wound you, what are you waiting for? You remain seated, are you afraid?"

765 786 •787 At these words, several of those present stand up and begin to dance, seeking the trance of possession. Some run into the village and come back running, carrying banana-tree stalks. Others drag thorny spathes of awara; two brandish an old, demolished boat.

[824] The drum furiously beats the rhythm of Kumenti. Part of the dancers, taken hold of by a furious delirium, jump and prance about. Certain ones take thorny spathes of awara (2) under the arm or pass them around the neck.

Part of those present are taken hold of in their turn by trances, including people of mature age and serious character like Fintiman, who is carried off in a faint.

Two possessed people, a man (Ernest, Kotika) and a woman (Awini, Boniville), smeared with pɛmba, are subject to extraordinary contortions. Ernest breaks a bottle over his head with such force that the pieces fly several meters. Both /185/ dance on their knees for an appreciable length of time (but the next day Awini will come to have herself cared for). Those present manifest frenzied joy.

765 535 534 About five o'clock the sɔ̃ŋgɛ dance begins. Three apinti drums are placed at the west wall of the shed. The orchestra is completed by an old overturned boat which seven to eight men strike with sticks.

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2. Thorny palm (astrocaryum vulgare) whose sharp thorns nearly 10 centimeters long are particularly formidable. It is impossible to pick up an awara spathe with bare hands without hurting oneself.

/188 cont./

428 In the custom of the Refugee Blacks, the inheritance
[613] must be dispersed among the members of the dead person's matrilineage in the strict sense (bɛɛ) and his children. / /
/189/ The custom of numerous African societies has it that the men inherit from men and the women from women. This notion is totally contrary to the legal thought of the Refugee Blacks. A house, an object, a boat, may pass from a man to a woman or conversely. It is the same with the lower gods with which the dead person might have been possessed.

428 If the dead person has not indicated before his death, in
● 787 front of witnesses, the distribution of his property, the same
764 divinatory procedure is used as for the determination of the causes of death: the coffin being carried on the heads of two men, in front of it are lined up the members of the dead person's matrilineage in the restricted sense and his children. The president of the lãnti kuutu asks: "To whom dost thou leave thy house?" The coffin moves toward one of those present, then: "To whom dost thou leave thy boat?" "To whom dost thou leave thy gun?" "To whom dost thou leave thy clearings being harvested?"

428 The partial heirs thus designated may enter immediately into possession of their legacies.

428 Reserved are what the Boni call the "equipment" of the
765 dead person, that is, his personal belongings, linen, money, which will be divided up after the lifting of mourning.

The customary rule is the following:

[602] For the duration of the mourning, these objects shut up in a trunk are put under the care of the eldest child if a woman was concerned, of the eldest classificatory nephew if a man was
428 concerned. After the lifting of mourning, the distribution is
602 made by the dead person's mother, if she is still alive, if not by the eldest of the classificatory uncles or aunts, and if they all are dead, by the eldest of the surviving classificatory brothers or sisters of the dead person.

/190 cont./

428 178 A tendency which has appeared during recent years in connection with men consists in bequeathing during their lifetime the essential part of their property to the children they have raised.

613 •[787] Inheritance of functions and powers. Upon the death of a lineage head, the yɔrka of the dead man is asked whom it wishes to see named. Then the council assembles to proceed with the nomination; it remains free in its choice, the will of the dead man beyond the grave does not have the force of law; but actually, it seems to be most often followed.

As for the function of captain which is common to all the fractions of one lo, the inheritance may pass from one fraction to another.

Ex.: for the Awara Bakka lo, the succession:
Asèmbay (Aw.B.2);
Pèèyon (Aw.B.1);
Kondoku (Aw.B.1).

000 /191/

CHAPTER VII

BELIEFS

Origin of the Beliefs of the Refugee Blacks

771 128 The spiritual life of the Refugee Blacks of the Guianas is intimately bound up with their social life, and the division we are obliged to make for the sake of clearness of the account is very often arbitrary. So we shall try to point out these connections wherever they are essential.

/197 cont./

788 [843] [854] [783] The rites of the worship of Odun are known only by the grand man and by an old man who replaces him when he travels. They are practiced only on the occasion of the collective oath against wisi, renewed every two or three years, and when it is necessary to implore Odun's mercy toward an offender. The officiant bathes the latter's body with a maceration of leaves that he alone knows.

783 787 [778] To question Odun and know whether he pardons, they make use of a sacred object named afalaku, placed on a board put on the heads of two men. The answers yes and no are deduced by interpretation of the movements of the bearers, as in the interrogation of the dead.

695 The oath before Odun is also practiced as a legal test, permitting a man unjustly accused of theft or any misdeed whatever to justify himself.

Thus, in November, 1959, B... of Asisi, accused by two Djuka of being responsible for the burning of a large cabin /carbet/ in which objects of value were stored, asked to justify himself before Odun.

671 771 571 Odun's laws, which have the effect of forbidding violence, vengeance, and every form of oppression, give to the society of the Refugee Blacks a unique atmosphere of dignity and serenity which is not found to the same degree in animistic African societies. Most African societies censure sorcery and murder, but they accept vengeance and various forms of oppression. It is probable that the men who, two or three centuries ago, deep in the forests of Surinam, developed these laws, were inspired more or less consciously by Christian ideas; but they introduced them into an African system of thought, associating them with the idea of material sanctions in the present life, without which they would have been powerless.

/199 cont. /

581 The Refugee Blacks change their attitude immediately as soon as one speaks to them about marriage. Men and women are unanimous in considering marriage as an intolerable violation of individual freedom and as a tie without purpose; they talk about it with veritable indignation, even having the feeling of an offense against morality.

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Cults of Possession

[171] [771] The phenomena of possession are extremely frequent among the Blacks of America (possession by saints or inspiration by the Holy Spirit among the Blacks of Brazil and the United States, voodooism in Haiti). With the Refugee Blacks they make up the very base of religious life to the point of being the normal means of communication between the gods and men; they have profound effects on all social life.

The cults of possession practiced by the Refugee Blacks of Guiana differ from those of the Blacks of Brazil and Haiti and do not appear to be directly connected with the African cults which have been described.

[128] We shall give here only very concise information about the ritual of these cults and we shall mainly try to show their place in relation to the institutions of the Refugee Blacks, and their functioning.

787 Possession is believed to be the entrance into a man of a suprahuman entity (divinity, spirit of an ancestor) which, during a variable length of time generally rather short (a few minutes to several hours), uses the body of this man and expresses itself through his mouth. They say that the man has become the horse - hasi - of the divinity. They also say: "Such-and-such a divinity entered his head." The possessed person is called

[114] gadu mã (gadu umã for a woman). This word has been translated improperly as "priest" in the first works treating of the Refugee Blacks.

/199 cont./

787 [771] The phenomena of possession exist among other populations of the Guianas and especially among the Amerindians, but among the Refugee Blacks they have special and well-defined forms.

--For the duration of possession, the ordinary consciousness of the man is totally abolished. When he comes back to himself, he no longer remembers anything and the others present have to repeat to him what the divinity revealed. [191] This total loss of consciousness during possession appears to be a very constant phenomenon with the Blacks, in Africa as much as in America. [114] Professor de Goeje calls attention to the fact that the Indian medicine man, on the contrary, does not lose /200/ consciousness during his trances and is supposed to receive, himself, the revelations of the spirits.

When a man is possessed by a divinity, in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks he is no longer there; what his body may do is not attributed to him at all. They say: "The gadu does this, says that, dances in such a way." If the gadu hurt someone (but that practically never happens) or broke something, its bearer would not have any responsibility.

787 198 [776] --The divinity expresses itself in a language peculiar to it; we shall see further on that there are four categories of divinities likely to become incarnate in men, which corresponds to four secret languages of which in practice only two are known by the Boni, at least by the oldest among them.

The bearer of the divinity, in his usual state of consciousness, knows in general this language, which he has learned from a teacher if it is a matter of a possession desired by him and obtained with the help of definite practices.

But there are also numerous cases of unprovoked possession (in the kunu especially) and people state that in this case the divinity speaks its language just as well, although its bearer has never learned it;

/200 cont./

● 787 --Possession is manifested by kinds of trances called gita or k3mfo, of a varying nature according to the divinity concerned, which sometimes involve phenomena of insensibility and acts impossible to perform in a normal state;

782 776 784 --The first time the divinity enters a man, it imposes a kina (interdiction) upon him which will henceforth be the sign of his function. This is what is called a gadu kina. This kina varies from one divinity to another, but in principle a given divinity imposes the same kina on its divers bearers. The divinity names itself and indicates to its bearer a means of calling it back in case of need: make such-and-such gestures, scatter such-and-such a liquid or powder.

All that is recorded by those present who reveal it to the person possessed when he has come round.

It is taken for granted that the god protects its bearer as long as the latter respects the laws of its cult and observes its kina (in the opposite case the god may punish him cruelly).

787 776 789 428 Conversely it is assumed that the man has a certain power, a certain right over the god who possesses him. They say that he is the master of it, masa, word which is habitually used in the sense "to be the owner of." At his death he can bequeath this god in the forms and according to the laws regulating the inheritance of property. Of course the god is capable of not ratifying this decision, and it is free to manifest itself in anyone it wishes. But they affirm that in most cases it follows docilely the choice of its bearer. We shall see that this inheritance of gods plays an essential role in the functioning of the kunu.

787 181 Apprenticeship for possession. What goals does a man pursue who desires thus to have a gadu? Above all he seeks strength. To succeed in life, to be protected against his enemies, to be respected: Such are the goals generally pursued and openly recognized by the Refugee Blacks who "have a gadu."

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787 One also often finds as an avowed goal the idea of being
181 useful to his lineage.

Disinterested mystical impulses appear totally absent from these cults.

787 But that is only one aspect of the phenomena of possession;
154 they really seem to be, in large measure, unconscious and
787 involuntary. Everyone can try to obtain a gadu, but everyone
791 does not succeed; one must have a certain predisposition.
[154] "One cannot oblige a gadu to enter a man," say the Boni; it
certainly seems, in fact, that in nearly half the cases possession takes place spontaneously and sometimes to the great terror of the person concerned: this is observed especially in the kunu.

[776] Mimi, a woman about 46 years old in 1958, of the Kotika lineage, was possessed by two gadu, an Ampuku and a Papa gadu. Here is how her near relatives relate the fashion in which they came into her.

[158] About ten years before, Mimi was showing signs of mental derangement. Her mind wandered, she sometimes used to leave the village to run in the bush at random, she uttered disconnected words (1). Then she fell very ill (pleurisy?).

[828]
[171]

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1. It is necessary to note on this subject the very widely held idea among the Refugee Blacks, as among the Creoles, that certain forms of mental imbalance are due to the action of an entity which is trying to manifest itself in a man and does not succeed. In order to cure this man, he must be "washed" with appropriate leaves so that the god can come to manifest itself in him; the rest of the time he will be normal.

787 /201 cont./
791 The elders then consulted the oracles and perceived that Mimi
776 was victim of an *Ampuku* named Maogan which for a very long
[613] time had been pursuing the Kotika lineage with its vengeance
(784) (*kunu*). In order to protect herself, she sought to have herself
given a more powerful god, and she became the pupil of an
obiaman specialist in the cult of the *Papa gadu*. In this way she
[782] had a *Papa gadu* named Ayaémé, divinity of beneficent char-
acter to which, in difficult cases, her family applies in order
[346] to obtain advice, protection, and remedies. She had a little
hut built beside her house, where the god goes to rest when it
has finished each of its trips to the country of men. Ayaémé
[784] imposed on Mimi its *kina* which concerns a fish. But even with
all this she was not rid of her *kunu* of the *Ampuku*; and one day,
something it had not yet done, the latter revealed itself in her
[784] and spoke through her mouth. It announced that it would con-
[782] tinue to exercise its *kunu* against the Kotika lineage. They ap-
peased it by sacrifices of red cloth and beer; since then, it
seems calm and in rather good humor. It comes into Mimi from
time to time and speaks in Saramaka language. They are very
afraid of it, but they do not hesitate to question it and ask it for
[784] remedies, which it sometimes indicates. It laid on Mimi three
gadu kina concerning the acouchy, the agami, and the
armadillo.

791 *Organization of the cults of possession.* Strictly speaking, no
787 religious brotherhoods exist in Boni country; there are only
794 teachers - *bas*(2) - who have received their power from another

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2. It does not seem advisable to translate this word by "priest." In the minds of the Refugee Blacks, this is a matter of a teacher teaching pupils; they use the same word to designate a European or Creole schoolmaster.

/201 cont./

791 teacher and who teach a small group of disciples - kineki -,
787 without distinction of villages or lineages and under their sole
[794] responsibility; each one, man or woman, is absolutely free to
pursue his teaching.

/202/These teachers are not themselves possessed, but they are believed to know the processes which permit the neophyte to obtain possession with the minimum of risks. They accept the
[776] fact, however, that that involves dangers, for one cannot oblige a particular gadu to come into someone, and one may in its place obtain an undesirable gadu.

791 Procedures vary according to the categories of gadu sought.
787 But they involve three elements which are always found in one
776 form or another:

--They begin by teaching the pupil the language of the
[198] divinity, or rudiments at the very least (as we shall point out further on, these languages appear to be in decline); these lessons are private;

[824] --On behalf of a group of pupils, the teacher prepares infusions of certain leaves which are suited to the divinity in question. It is thought that the god likes these plants and that they have the power to attract it.

[788] In certain cults it is required of the pupil to utter at the same time formulas inviting the god to come into him. But this is not general; in the cult of the Papa gadu especially, the teachers bathe the students in the greatest silence.

791 At the end of the session, the student is often asked to
787 drink a little of the infusion. One might believe that it is a
824 matter of a process having a physical action, certain plants possibly containing hypnotic substances; but except for one aspect of the cult of the Kumënti of which we shall speak later, this does not seem true; especially about the plants believed to attract the Papa gadu, it seems that they have received this role because of their color or odor. Our feeling is that, at least
[562] for the Papa gadu cult which appeals more especially to women, suggestion plays an essential part.

/202 cont./

153 --Pupils are taught, individually or collectively, to dance
791 in the manner of the god. Indeed, each divinity has a charac-
787 teristic form of dance, which it executes sometimes by using
776 the bodies of its bearers when it comes into them. The pupil
535 must imitate as best he can the individual movements and the
[868] rhythm of this dance, while the teacher, using the appropriate
drum, beats out the calling formulas.

If the god is satisfied with the student, he will be able to come into him.

791 These exercises appear to have as their goal the creation
787 in the pupils of forms of conditioned reflexes; they have nothing
785 in common with the very harsh ordeals which the medicine man
153 of the Guiana Indians imposes upon himself, and do not involve
any form of asceticism. It does not seem that chastity, even
temporary, is demanded of the student, any more than fasting
or doing anything contrary to his inclinations.

787 The idea of a spiritual death and resurrection of the
791 possessed person, with all the ritual it entails: long reclusion
of the neophytes, change of name of the one possessed, who is
supposed to relearn all the activities of ordinary life, does not
appear to have been kept by the Refugee Blacks. In a general
[152] way, the atmosphere of solemn seriousness, /203/ of secrecy,
and of fear, which characterize the Dahomey cults of possession
is not found among them.

791 These lessons are always paid for and are even very
787 expensive. Payment is made in pieces of cloth, in demijohns
435 of tafia.

[436] Having a Kumɛnti amounted in 1958 to at least 25,000
francs. This payment is not only compensation for the teacher;
[181] it is the mark of legitimacy. What has not been paid for is not,
for the Refugee Blacks, legitimately acquired. We shall come
back to this important point later.

/203 cont./

153 Possession begins progressively; in the beginning the
787 divinity does not find in its bearer sufficient passivity, it does
791 not succeed well in expressing itself through his mouth, spectators observe only incoherent gestures and hear only unintelligible stammerings. The pupil must continue his training for a long time in order to become a suitable bearer.

787 The god, when it has just entered a man, always begins by rendering homage in its language to Masa Gadu, proclaiming that it acts only in his name and by his will.

[576] Then it greets those present, employing formulas which
[198] are the exact transposition into its language of the ordinary Boni formulas of politeness; that even if it is getting ready to speak to them in the harshest manner.

The god speaks then in its language, saying not very intelligible things to the audience that appear to be related to what goes on in its country, to its family (for it is believed that these lower gods have a family). Finally, it begins to speak in ordinary language in order to be understood by those present, and answers questions.

776 Various categories of gods capable of bringing on possession.
787 The Refugee Blacks assume that four categories of lower gods
825 exist:

The first category consists of a series of gods which present themselves to men under very different aspects but which are nevertheless felt to be of the same nature. All speak the Kumenti language, all are well disposed toward men and do not exercise against them the kunu, that is, the curse;

--The Kumɛnti, which have the appearance of jaguars and live in the bush;

--The Djadja, which have the appearance of ocelots;

--The Opete, which have the appearance of the urubu and which reside in the air;

/203 cont./

776 787 825 --The Bũnsuŋki, which have the appearance of Indian women and which reside in the waters of the rivers;

[784] [198] The second category is that of the Ampuku, much feared gods of the bush, likely to exercise the kunu against men. The Ampuku speak a language which is very well known to the Saramaka but which nobody speaks in Boni country. When they wish to be understood, they speak the ordinary Saramaka dialect. They can, it is said, /204/ be seen at night in the bush in the form of unknown men dressed in the manner of the Refugee Blacks;

[198] The third category is that of the Vɔɔdũ or Papa gadu, gods still more feared, which become incarnate in the boa snake dagowe. They speak the Papa language;

776 787 [198] Finally, much feared also are the Kãntamasu, gods of the termitaries, which speak a language which nobody understands and use the Kumenti language to make themselves understood.

It is important to note that there is not a god Kumẽnti, a god Ampuku, etc., as there was in the pantheon of the Ancients a god Mars, a god Vulcan. For the Refugee Blacks those are generic names like Frenchman, Englishman. Questioned about a phenomenon of posession, they will answer: "It is Ampuku who makes," but in the same way they would say in front of a boat: "It is Saramaka who makes."

776 787 825 The relationships between these gods and their animal form are obscure. For the Vɔɔdũ it is clear that people believe they really live in the dagowe snakes, since the accidental death of one of these snakes in the burning of a clearing is considered a calamity which risks bringing a kunu. But that does not prove that a divine character is attributed to the snake itself. As for the Kumẽnti there does not appear to be any precise bond between the genie and its jaguar appearance. If one meets a jaguar, one may fire on him all the same without inconvenience. If he is the support of a Kumẽnti, the shot will not be able to touch him, the god will not get angry about it.

/204 cont./

776 787 825 This shows that in the minds of the Refugee Blacks, the animal is simply a prop for the god. The god borrows this body in order to manifest itself, but it is not bound to it by nature. These conceptions are totally contrary to those of the Indians, who tend to personify in their minds the beings and phenomena of nature.

776 787 As we have said, the Boni do not see these gods since the person possessed loses consciousness. But in the time of the ancestors, there were people who used to see the gods, and it is through them that their present-day descendants have an idea of their appearance; on the other hand, certain gods such as the *Ampuku* and the *Būnsuŋki* may be seen in dreams.

Sometimes the residence of this or that god is known, for it has revealed it through the mouth of its bearer; the god's [823] name is then given to that place. For example, at the mouth of the Abounami there is a fall named Ma Akotí Gadu Sula. It is there that the god resides which revealed itself in olden days in an old woman named Akoti.

776 613 *Connections with the group of relatives.* The idea of a god protector of the lineage, whose worship, brought by the founder of the group, is regarded as indispensable to the life of the collectivity, is not found clearly among the Refugee Blacks. There are actually many divinities which have entered the lineage and which are worshiped collectively. But these [784] divinities are intruders; they have penetrated into the group by force in order to exert an inexorable vengeance against it. [782] People do not apply to them to ask for protection, and they are worshiped only because they cannot be expelled.

776 602 /205/ There is not believed to be any kinship tie between the gods and men, nor any tie of a systematic or exclusive character.

/205 cont./

776 Still, they assume that the gods that have entered a
613 matrilineage tend to be transmitted within this group. If, for
428 example, a woman is possessed by a Papa gadu, at her death
● [787] she must bequeath it in the same way as her property, and she
can bequeath it only to someone of her lineage.

We have seen in studying the transmission of the god of Kotoïda († 1956), that only the women of the Afi lineage to which she belonged could inherit.

776 Even if the god is not bequeathed, which sometimes
613 happens, if it exercises the kunu, it will manifest itself sooner
784 or later in a member of the lineage. But long years may pass
before it shows itself. This conception is absolutely clear to
the Refugee Blacks, and furthermore, if it did not exist, the
[114] idea of the kunu would be without support. People have there-
[428] fore wrongly believed in a transmission of gods from father to
son.

346 Material organization of cults. A material organization of the
787 cults of possession exists within the limits of the localized
794 lineage (lo). This organization is completely independent of
613 the apprenticeship of these cults. It permits the members of
the lineage to easily practice cults they have received anywhere,
on their own responsiblity.

In each lo there exists in general one single chapel (obia ɔsu) for all the divinities of the same category.

For example in the Awara Bakka lo quarter in Asisi (140 persons), for about 15 women having a Papa gadu, there exists only a single one. There is an obia ɔsu for the Ampuku (three or four possessed persons) and another for the Kumɛnti (about ten possessed people).

The chapel of the Papa gadu is placed under the responsibility of the head of the lo. On this subject it is to be noted that the individualized lineages Aw.B.3 and Afi, which however have separate gods, are included in this organization.

/205 cont./

346 The objects placed in these chapels are simply the cloth-
794 ing, beverage, and tools of the gods when they come to visit
● 787 men; they correspond nearly to what the Refugee Blacks leave
613 in a farming habitation where they go to work regularly. For
example, in the Papa gadu ɔsu of the Awara Bakka quarter of
[293] Asisi, which serves for about 15 gods, each one has a definite
place on the shelves to lay out especially the scarf which serves
it as a garment and a bottle of beer (a bottle is always kept in
readiness by the bearer of the god) (1).

1. The Papa gadu do not like tafia. If the usual bearer of one of these gods has drunk tafia, it cannot come into him.

[534] They still stow the Papa dɔ̃ drum in this chapel. This
drum, like the chapel itself, is believed to belong to the
Papa gadu god which first came into a member of the lineage
to exercise the kunu. In the example mentioned of the Awara
[428] /206/ Bakka lo of Asisi, in 1957 it was the centenarian grand-
mother Kuluba who had borne this god since her youth, having
herself received it, by several successive transmissions, from
a distant ancestress.

[621] In villages like Boniville and Papaïston where fragments of lineage of entirely different origins coexist, each has its own organization.

For example in Boniville there is a Papa gadu ɔsu for the fragment of the Lapé lineage (it belongs to Téresa whose god exercises the kunu on this lineage). The fragment of the lineage has another.

In Papaïston the Toïna (Bakabuchi) lineage, reduced to half a dozen persons, has a Papa gadu ɔsu of its own.

776 /*206 cont.*/
787 *The Kumēnti*. These gods are common to the Saramaka
[184] (Kromenti) (1), Djuka, and Boni. The *Kumēnti* are considered
to be benevolent gods and friends of men, so their possession
is very much desired. They do not come into men spontaneously,
they are obtained only by applying to a teacher. In principle
[562] only men can obtain *Kumēnti*, while on the other hand only
women can have *Bǔnzunki* /*sic*/.

776 The *Kumēnti* are specialized in protection against fire
787 and against machete and gun wounds. These dangers hold the
751 largest place among the anxieties of the Refugee Blacks, who
spend almost all their life in the bush and with whom nearly
[789] all sores become infected and have serious consequences. Thus
the *Kumēnti* cult holds an important place in their magic; even
someone who is not possessed will try to obtain from these gods
an *ɔbia* that will protect him from these various dangers.

153 The instruction of the disciples of these gods takes as its
791 pattern the procedures described above, but the collective dances
787 appear to play an essential part. The teacher calls on the gods
786 by beating a special rhythm on ordinary drums (*apinti*) and by
[533] uttering invocations punctuated by the rattle of the *saka* (Indian
[534] *maraka*, that is, hollow calabash provided with a handle and
containing seeds).

[174] 1. There is no doubt about the origin of this word; it is a deformation of Coromantin, name given in the 18th century to Ashanti country. The "Coromantin Negroes," reputed to be particularly intractable, played a large rôle in the slave revolts. The Kumenti cult of possession must originally have been a cult peculiar to the Coromantin nation.

/206 cont./
153 containing seeds). Sometimes, when a god has entered a pupil,
791 the teacher puts the latter's passivity to the test by insulting the
787 god with the help of the drum. The Kumɛnti gets angry, breaks
786 bottles and swallows ground glass, walks in the fire, hits himself
[789] with machete blows, all without any wound resulting, they
say, on the body of its bearer.

[302] These frenzied dances, whose participants completely
covered with pɛmba (white clay) are as if hallucinated, have a
bizarre aspect which is perceptible to some of the Boni themselves.
They do not have any secret character and constitute,
[522] on the contrary, a fine spectacle for the village people. The
spectators double up with laughter at the contortions and strange
actions which the gods inspire in those possessed. They are
[521] talked about at length /207/ afterward in the evenings,
humorists imitating what they saw done there, without any fear
whatever of irritating the gods.

791 Each "teacher for Kumɛnti" owns a small gadu ɔsu in
787 which are lined up the implements of the cult. One finds in
346 general in these chapels a post crudely carved in the shape of a
human bust, a block of stone, jaguar skulls, some kɔkɔti (shrub
stalks with a spontaneous double bend, thought to be the prop
of spirits in the bush), and a saka (maraka), the whole sprinkled
with white clay (pɛmba). One finds also beside the door a seat
and a trough which are used for the ablutions of the pupils.

153 While bathing his body with the infusion of leaves prepared
791 by the teacher, the neophyte repeats, in ordinary language,
787 a series of invocations: "Come to me, enter into me. But before
788 entering into me, it is necessary to teach me the things
of thy country; O God, when thou art in me, may I be able to
dance on broken glass without its cutting me; may I be able to
dance in fire without its burning me. If tomorrow someone
takes a machete to hurt me, he shall not be able to come forward.
If someone takes a gun to shoot me, (his weapon) must
break, must not be able to take off. If someone is sick, make
an ɔbia for him, he must recover."

/207 cont. /

153 791 787 The teacher has the pupil turn in a circle around the mortar in which has been prepared the infusion of leaves, until he is dizzy. Alternately he makes him turn and "washes" his body with the infusion. Possession occurs by itself at the end of a certain number of sessions.

276 [171] In the practices intended to make the *gita* of *Kumɛnti* "rise," the absorption of toxic substances enters, especially tobacco juice, method employed by the Indian medicine men. But once the reflexes are created, there is no further need for these substances; the *gita* appears as soon as the calling procedures are used, which are of two kinds:

--Personal procedures: The man voluntarily calls on his *gita* while putting on the god's costume and taking a certain posture;

--Outside procedures: The *gita* may be released from outside either by calling the god by name or by beating the corresponding rhythm on the drum.

787 158 When the pupil begins to feel the *gita* of *Kumɛnti*, that
is first manifested by trances. We have very often been present
at these attacks, which usually come on at night in the forest,
but commonly also during the day. The one possessed suddenly
lets go of the objects he was holding (for example, if he was
in the process of eating, he drops plate and spoon), and rushes
forward running through the forest howling rhythmically as if
he had become an animal. His eyes are rolled upward, he no
longer is conscious of his surroundings; he is not in any way
threatening; these fits are totally inoffensive in spite of their
[147] impressive aspect. One sees possessed people in this state do
things which are difficult to explain, such as running in complete
darkness in the most impenetrable underbrush without
falling or hurting themselves, or climbing up in a few seconds
on a craggy rock which would have been hard to scale in full
daylight.

/208/

153 In proportion as the pupil perfects himself, the god expresses
791 itself more easily with the help of his body, begins to
787 do coordinated acts and to speak. They say that the *gita* has
[195] been "arranged" (*seeka*). The *Kumẽnti* speak with a gruff,
jerky voice, characteristic, which humorists love to imitate in
the evenings' recitals.

In order to call on his *gita* voluntarily, the pupil crouches down, feet together, throwing *pemba* from right to left at the level of his feet and uttering the formula: "*O Kumẽnti, djumpo ku a mi.*" Then he remains immobile in this position and waits; possession takes place generally at the end of a few minutes.

776 The *Kumẽnti* which enter thus into men are exclusively
787 male gods; it is known that they have wives because they talk
about them, but they never manifest themselves.

[812] The *Kumẽnti* are generally benevolent; still, no more
than any divinity of the Refugee Blacks, do they represent a
principle of goodness and justice in itself. They watch in a
partial fashion over the interests of their bearers. Thus it is
that A..., of the Dipélu II *lo*, has a *Kumẽnti* which reacts in
a violent way when it has the impression that danger threatens
[158] its bearer. It enters into him suddenly, takes a machete and
storms through the village, while people prudently barricade
themselves in their houses.

787 In certain circumstances, when their trances are particularly
789 intense, the people possessed by *Kumẽnti* are capable, it
is said, of walking in fire, dancing on broken glass, climbing
thorny *awara* palm trees, and even having themselves struck
with blows of a machete without any wound resulting from it.
Professor de Goeje gives impressive personal testimony on this
subject, such as the case of a possessed man who overturned a
pail of boiling water on his body (1). Mr. Mathieu, Director of

1. In a note in Mr. W.F. van Lier's work, § 37.

/208 cont./

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the Forestry Society of Saint-Laurent, told us of seeing in 1937 among the Paramaka a possessed man take firmly in his hands a red-hot axe-head and keep it between his two hands for an appreciable length of time.

Personally we have several times seen possessed people thrash themselves with spiny awara branches and break bottles on their heads with such violence that the pieces flew several meters; some of them were hurt, but others presented an intact epidermis.

There is no special instruction for the exercises of invulnerability. The possessed person does what he feels capable of, strikes himself progressively harder and harder, breaks bottles, etc.

It is affirmed that certain possessed people are capable of climbing the thorny awara palm trees. If the gita then abandons them, they can no longer come down. Those who know the Kumenti /sic/ language well then evoke the god by formulas so that he will come back.

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[173]
Theoretically, if someone wrongs a man who has a Kumēnti, his gita "rises" immediately. The guilty one can do no more than flee. They say that in the old days possessed people were seen /209/ to kill those who had done them wrong. No kunu can result from this if the victim is in the wrong. Nothing like this has been seen for a very long time.

The principle is that if one has nothing to reproach himself about with respect to the possessed person, one has nothing to fear from him. This is why people do not hesitate to interpose themselves between the possessed one and the object of his wrath.

[789]
If two men having a Kumēnti get into an argument, their gita "rise" simultaneously and they strike each other with machete blows without, it is said, any harm resulting to either one, until someone separates them.

/209 cont./

787 If someone has a Kumɛnti, certain objects used in the
784 cult: pestle, mortar, machete, must not be raised near him.
His gita "would rise" immediately. Likewise while he is eating,
neither tiger nor gun must be mentioned. To prevent their gita
from rising, those concerned may take the precaution of putting
a small piece of wood behind the ear while they eat.

787 These past years the cult of the Kumɛnti was clearly
178 declining among the Boni, as was the whole of their religious
[771] life; every one, indeed, no longer thought about anything but
[181] earning money and was always traveling in order to do this,
[484] which made difficult the indispensable meetings and dances.
On the other hand, cared for effectively when they are ill in
[743] the Maripasoula hospital, the Boni feel the cult of the Kumɛnti
[755] less necessary, of which the principal social function is to cure.
So, while in 1948 we used to be present very often at manifestations of the gita of Kumɛnti, in 1952 they were becoming much
rarer and more secret /modest/. They were tending to fall to
the level of the latent manifestations of which we shall speak
further on. In 1956 we did not observe in the course of the forest
[346] work any spontaneous attack of this gita. The chapels dedicated
to the Kumɛnti are scarcely maintained and are falling into ruins;
such is the fate of the gods judged benevolent toward men.
[751] Nevertheless people continue to lay great store by the ɔbia of
Kumɛnti, especially the man nɛŋge ɔbia which protects against
the machete and the gun, and the Kumɛnti bui, ring of Kumɛnti,
instrument of divination.

776 The Bũnsuŋki. The Bũnsuŋki are gods which live in the waters,
[823] by preference at the head of falls, beside rocks bearing copses
of detached trees; they can also reside ordinarily in these trees
[787] themselves. They appear sometimes in dreams to men as well
as to women in the aspect of Indians, more commonly Indian
women with long hair. This is why they are sometimes called
wata Ingi, Indians of the water.

776 /209 cont./

[778] [782] wata Iŋgi, Indians of the water. In certain spots, people have known since the time of the ancestors that there resides such a Bũnsuŋki, whose name they know; when they pass there, they address a prayer to it while making a sacrifice of tafia.

776 171 (The Bũnsuŋki must not be confused with wata mama, the mama-of-the-water of the Creoles, a dreaded divinity but one which the Boni do not appear to worship. The wata mama lives at the bottom of deep holes in river beds and never allows her face to be seen; she sometimes abandons one of her long hairs on the rocks and he who finds it becomes rich).

776 ● 787 [562] [789] /210/ The Bũnsuŋki can enter into human beings, exclusively, it seems, into women. They give a different gita from those of the Kumẽnti. The possessed person dances at the edge of the water, then swims and dives for a long time. They affirm that if its possession is sufficiently intense, the genie carries the possessed woman along to the bottom of the water, where she stays for a very long time without any harm! That is supposed to have happened especially in Asisi village to a woman named Dabisa.

Possession by the Bũnsuŋki is not frequent. In 1952 it was known in Boni country in only three women.

[562] [788] [782] As for men, they may perceive these divinities in dreams and receive benefits from them. For that they go to the place where it resides and bathe, uttering an invocation: "O god, watch over me, protect me, come to me at night when I sleep, speak to me, act so that I may not be sick, so that I may get rich." The following night, the divinity will come in a dream, demand a sacrifice (beer in general), say that it /grants/ the prayer.

776 The Vɔɔdũ (1). These are gods much feared for their evil

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1. This word is obviously a deformation of the Dahomey word vodũn.

/210 cont./

776 character, touchy and vindictive. In speaking of them one [576] says Papa gadu (papa does not mean "father"; it is a term of respect used for important personages (2)). They are believed

776 They are believed [825] to have as habitual bearers the boa snakes (dagowe) (3) which are not to be confused with the great water snakes (anaconda) [824] that the Refugee Blacks call mboma sineki. They may also reside in silk-cotton trees (kankan tree) and in the trees called katu udu (Bombax surinamiensis).

• [787] The Vɔɔdũ which incarnate themselves in humans may be of either sex; if a male god is concerned, it is called "tata vɔɔdũ."

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2. This is the interpretation given by the Refugee Blacks. However, 18th-century documents on the origin of the slaves draw attention to the existence of an African tribe called Papa. Allusions contained in documents of the archives of Surinam, recently studied by Madame Silvia W. de Groot, would tend to identify the Papa with one of the populations of present-day Dahomey. In this hypothesis, the cult of the papa gadu would represent an archaic form of the Dahomey cult of the snake gods.

3. This word appears to be the deformation of the Dahomey word dãgbe.

/210 cont./

776 The Bumba gadu, other gods of the same nature and
[825] equally feared, have as bearers other categories of snakes,
principally the great anaconda water snakes.

[984] The Vɔɔdũ, we have said, are feared; they can exercise
on a lineage the collective curse called kunu. But, no more
[812] than the Kumɛnti do not represent a principle of good, they do
not represent a principle of evil. Not all are so badly disposed
toward men, and even if one of them is the enemy of a lineage,
it is not for that reason badly disposed toward the rest of men.
● 787 However this may be, the cult of possession of the Papa gadu is
178 not at all in decline among the Boni. According to the cross-
[562] checking we have been able to do, of the 670 persons living on
the French bank there are at least 40 to 50 who have a Papa gadu,
the great majority of them old women.

787 /211/ The Voodũ /sic/ are much feared, and for that very reason
784 much respected. They are oracles which are consulted very
often, without consideration of the evil their kunu has done
and will still do. A god which exercises the kunu but which is
provisionally declared appeased may be consulted without danger;
it is always assumed that in any case its bearer, if he respects
its commands, has nothing to fear from it.

787 It is possible that, very unconsciously, women use the fear
562 that the Papa gadu gods inspire in order to maintain their independence and privileged position in Refugee Black society.

153 Instruction in possession appears to take as a pattern the
791 same principles as that which correspond to the Kumɛnti. It
787 involves the teaching of the Papa language; this language ap-
[198] peared to us to be in decline; in fact, it is used only for formulas
[178] of greeting; then the possessed people vaticinate in ordinary
language. Instruction in possession also involves daily ablutions
[515] with decoctions of leaves; certain of these mixtures are par-
[824] ticularly complicated (it is said that they include more than a
hundred different kinds of leaves). Instruction is essentially in-
[534] dividual; however it also includes dances; on this occasion a

/211 cont./

153 special drum is used, about two meters long and very narrow,
791 devoid of any decoration, which is called lĩnga dɔɔ̃ or papa
● 787 dɔɔ̃.
534 To call on her gita, the possessed woman (they are almost
787 always women) stands, puts on a piece of cloth which she always
[562] keeps nearby and always takes along with her when she travels:
this is the garment of the god; it consists of a sort of scarf
crossed in front; then she throws white clay, pemba, on her feet
from right to left and left to right while invoking the god.
Possession is almost immediate. One sees the woman's eyes
roll up and her expression become haggard. The god does not
cover himself entirely with pemba like the Kumɛnti, he makes
himself a sort of headband on the forehead with white clay.
787 He begins with an invocation to Masa Gadu said in ordinary
788 language.
639 "Masa gadu, gi mi pimisi, beka mi na pikin nɛgge; ala
[782] sani di mi ɔ taki, na yu mu gi mi kaakiti, beka na yu abi mi
kaakiti, da mi gyãfalu gi yu."

"Masa Gadu, I implore you, for I am a humble creature;
(in) all that I am going to say, it is you who will give me
strength, for my strength is in you; I shall exalt you."

787 Next come formulas of welcome to those present, which
788 are the exact translation of the formulas of greeting of everyday
[198] life, then songs, all in the Papa language. After about a quarter
of an hour, it enters a hut and sits down, answering in ordinary
language the questions of those present, always in a singing
tone.

787 Possession by Papa gadu does not have the bestial character
of possession by Kumɛnti; outside of the dances, it does not
involve brutish gestures or bizarre acts; the possessed woman
hums softly in a shrill voice, moving with graceful gestures.
[531] /212/ Sometimes she draws strange signs on the huts; the Boni
state that that is a kind of writing, that other possessed people

787 531 /212 cont./
can read these messages; but we have not turned up any precise evidence on this subject (1).

1. These signs are very little systematized and have no relation whatever with the symbolic designs which figure in certain rituals of possession, especially in Dahomey and Haiti. It is permitted to see in them a simple likeness.

787 [265] [253] The Papa gadu are chiefly consulted to ask them to reveal the cause of misfortunes that happen. One of them is not asked to cure an illness unless the interrogation reveals that it brought it on.

776 648 [782] [171] [778] The worship of the Papa gadu snake gods makes a strong impression on the West Indian Creoles who maintain regular relations with the Refugee Blacks. Most consider it as diabolical in nature and disapprove of it, but if the presence of an "adder" (anaconda snake) is noted in a neighboring creek, and if at the same time misfortunes occur, it happens that a Creole may go to ask the Refugee Blacks to practice rites to mollify the vengeance of the god. We have happened to catch sight of, hidden in a copse behind the habitation of a gold miner, a small altar decorated with blue and red pennants, the usual place of worship of the Papa gadu.

755 Observation in Boniville, November, 1952.

[789] [164] An Asisi woman, Tini, comes to Boniville to consult her adoptive daughter Pamasa, about 35 years old, who is possessed by a Papa gadu named Adawa. Féni, 15 years old, Tini's son, has been sick for several days (fever, eruption all over the body). When someone comes to get us, the god has already entered into Pamasa, has sat down in a hut, and

/213 cont./

755 A stalk of *sɔŋgaafu* twice bent in an elbow is arranged on the ground. A cross is traced in the dirt.

Centered on the cross is placed a large basin into which is poured infusions of leaves taken from several calabashes.

The sick woman, still prostrate and groaning, is seated on a stool facing the basin. The contents of the basin are poured slowly over her body while she is massaged. It is not a question of a remedy in the literal sense of the word; the sick one is "washed" to help the god to manifest itself in her.

I notice that while going back into the hut she trembles almost no more; the attack seems to be subsiding.

In the meanwhile someone comes to call me elsewhere and I cannot come back until half an hour later. I find the sick woman standing, smeared with *pemba*, in the middle of a [787] meditative audience. The god has descended into her and is expressing itself in Papa language while she dances with slow gestures.

[753] [784] I am told that it has just given the explanation of the illness: it struck Bugi because she did not observe the *kina* given to all bearers of *Papa gadu*, to stay away from funeral ceremonies. Now, the day before yesterday, she had knowingly participated in the *tukka* dance around Kotoïda's coffin.

The *ɔbiaman* present beg the god to pardon, which it does after claiming a bottle of beer which it drinks through the mouth of its bearer.

152 164 753 784 Observation in Kormotibo, December 18, 1957.

On December 18 in the evening I find the village of Kormotibo in the clutches of terror. Several persons are sick from the effect of the *kunu*. Apaita, a young woman, has an enormous whitlow, following an accident; two women have been stricken with pneumonia.

/213 cont./

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784 These misfortunes are attributed to the kunu exercised by a Papa gadu god, since about a hundred years ago an ancestress named Akontɛ́ involuntarily killed a dagɔwe snake while fishing /nivrant/ a creek. In our day this god manifests itself in Aiama (Dip. II, E1), and another Papa gadu, which says it is the descendant of the first, manifests itself in Apaita (F9). It is the latter which, speaking through the mouth of Apaita, revealed that it was striking the village because nobody had danced for it for five years. ●[787] [155]

755 They called B...., obiaman specialized in the vɔɔdũ cult. He surrounded the chapel of the Papa gadu with stalks of sãŋgaafu placed vertically. He prepared an infusion of leaves with which the Kormotibo women who have a Papa gadu have just smeared themselves (they are four in number, including two outsiders to the Dipɛ́lu II lineage). It is a question of helping their gods to manifest themselves. [789]

People are going to dance eight nights running, part of the night. The agida drum drawn out of the chapel is set up in working position. /214/

The rites carried out to neutralize the kunu are:

--Cleaning of the chapel;

--Decoration by means of stalks of sãŋgaafu placed upright all around /it/;

--Bathing of the sick with leaves believed to have the power of making the influence of the Papa gadu go away;

--With other leaves, on the contrary concentrating the maleficent influence of the Papa gadu in a calabash which is then carefully shut up in the chapel.

787 Possession by the Ampuku. It is much more rare, and personally we have observed it only twice; the possessed people make circles of pɛmba around their eyes and draw kinds of ovals on

/214 cont./

787 their legs with this white clay; they prophesy in a singing tone, without the usual voice of their bearer's ceasing to be recognizable, expressing themselves in the Saramaka language.

796 The Ampuku have the appearance of men similar to Blacks, but unknown. They reside in the depths of the woods; [184] some are good, others bad. One can gain their good will by worshiping them, which is especially developed in Saramaka country.

796 535 [103] Baliki, of Kormotibo village, tells of having been present one day at a dance of the Ampuku, when he was traveling to the Saramaka village of Baien.

"During the day, people went on the paths far into the bush to put down calabashes containing certain herbs. At night were seen to come out of the forest a large number of unknown men, dressed in the manner of the Saramaka. They danced all night, and at dawn left again as they had come."

776 [789] [824] The Ampuku gods, considered to be maleficent gods of the bush, exercise their influence on everyone. When a person has slept in the bush, he "washes" himself free of Ampuku with an infusion of leaves of five plants which are part of the secondary flora surrounding the villages and of which the principal plant is the sangaafu (Costus cylindricus).

791 787 [619] Frequency of possession. In 1956 teachers or bas were very scarce in Boni country. For the Kumenti gods, only S... (Kotika) remained; for the Papa gadu, since the death of Antinon (Dju), there remained only M... (Papaïston) and B... (Misi). People were commonly going to receive instruction from Djuka teachers in the villages of the Tapanaoni.

787 562 It would be a great error to believe that nearly all the men have gods. On the contrary, this is an exception. According to the evaluations we were able to make, there is not more than one adult man out of six or seven who is possessed.

/214 cont./

562 On the other hand, possession is much more frequent among
789 women: it can be estimated that on the average, one adult
woman out of three or four has a gadu.

162 For example in Boniville, out of 115 persons including
776 about 70 adults, one reckons about 30 gods including 8 to 10
789 Papa gadu, 8 to 10 Kumɛnti, 1 Bunsunki, and 2 Ampuku.

791 Apprenticeship for possession can begin from adult age,
787 but it seems /215/ that in general it is between 35 and 50 that
561 women take heed of obtaining a gadu. Would that not be, very
unconsciously, the desire to stay in the limelight and indirectly
562 to keep a hold over men, once the age of sensual attraction is
past?

787 Possession continues for life, and it is out of the question for a god to be transmitted before the death of its bearer. For example, in 1957, the centenarian grandmother in Asisi village, Kuluba, still kept her Papa gadu god. She had not participated any more in the dances of possession for long years, but her gita was always consulted.

But it can happen, if a possessed person stops taking part in dances and practicing the rites that have been shown him, that any manifestation ceases at the end of a few years.

We observed that in B... of the Dipɛlu II lo, in 1948 and 1949. He used to exhibit strong attacks of the gita of Kumɛnti. He stopped his instruction, finding that it was costing too much and was taking time. In 1952 he exhibited only latent manifestations of his gita at rare intervals. In 1956 nothing was any longer observable.

787 It can happen, on the other hand, that attacks of pos-
789 session become so frequent and so strong that the person concerned risks losing his reason; if it concerns a god which did not come of its own initiative, one can try to expel it. In
[824] order to "wash" someone free of a gita, he is made to pass between two rows of ɔbiaman who hold dry palms, pina tɔŋgo, in their hands and utter adjurations.

787 789 [114] /215 cont./
in their hands and utter adjurations. We saw this rite performed in 1949 but without being able to observe the exact details.

789 791 The frequency of the phenomena of possession and the importance accorded to them imprint a remarkable character on the religious life of the Refugee Blacks: all these manifestations have for each one the character of obvious material fact. How, then, doubt that one lives with the gods, sees them, and speaks to them? Because of this fact the society of the Refugee Blacks is utterly impermeable to European influences. [177]

787 824 Some plants utilized in the rites of possession. The preparations with which the possessed people "wash" their bodies consist of macerations of leaves. The plants used, which for the most part belong to the secondary flora which develops in the old clearings, are very numerous. However, some are regarded as having a very unique power. [789] The first five especially are utilized by all the Boni to "wash off the Ampuku" when they have slept a night in the bush.

Aluku Name	Identification (1)	Use
Lebi katu	cotton	cult of the Ampuku
Kɔnɔpo wiwi	Hyptis atrorubens (Labiaceae)	--- /218/
Foo kɛkɛ	Tiaridium indicum (Borraginaceae)	---
Sume wiwi	Ocimum sanctum (?) (Labiaceae)	---

[122] 1. Identification by Mr. Hoock, botanist connected with the Institut français d'Amérique tropicale (IFAT) in Cayenne.

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Aluku Name	Identification	Use
Sɔ̃ŋgaafu	Costus cylindricus (zingiberaceae)	cult of the Papa gadu and of the Ampuku
Malimbelimbe	Piper sp. (?)	——
Fiili (Hɔ̃ligɔɔ̃)	Chamaesyae sp. (?) (euphorbiaceae)	——

828

Beliefs Concerning the Human Person and Its Development
Ancestor Worship

[191] The Refugee Blacks of the various tribes have precise and identical conceptions on this subject, which are found also, more or less mixed with Christian conceptions, among the West Indian populations of African origin. For them, man is formed of three elements: the body, the yɔrka which may be translated by personality, and a higher principle called akka.

[184] [128] It goes without saying that among the Boni, who have not elaborated these conceptions and received them from the Djuka, nobody is capable of discoursing on them. But numerous conceptions having to do with magic and to the relationships with the ancestors permit of rather reliable cross-checking.

774 The akka. It is not possible to translate akka (1) by soul in the sense we understand it. The akka is an immortal divine element

1. This word appears to be a deformation of kla (Agni-Baoulé), word to which a very comparable meaning is attached.

/217 cont./

774 Most of the Boni are not concerned with their akka. The only ones who take heed of it are those who have reasons to believe it irritated. The worship rendered varies a good deal from one individual to another in the nature and frequency of the rites performed.

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[840] For example, K...., of Papaïston village, prey to a persistent streak of badluck, went to consult a Creole lukumi from Surinam, who revealed to him that it was the doing of unsatisfied desires of his akka. His akka wanted a black dog and a copper bracelet. He procured both for himself, and since, he says, he no longer has the same bad luck.

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778 B...., head of T... village, has in a corner of his hut a post crudely carved in the shape of a bust with a half calabash from which emerge stalks of sangrafu on its head. At the side is a small fraga tiki. He tells me that this is the god of the cult of his akka; these rites are strictly personal with him.

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[822] Most of the akka esteem white beads and red cloth. If one sees a Boni wear a red cloak, one can be almost sure that it is by order of his akka.

● [787] If someone's mind wanders or he has bizarre dreams, he may see in this the feeling that his akka wishes to leave him and that he is in danger of its happening. He then goes to ask
[789] an ɔbiaman to make him an akka tetey: this is a ring of fibers worn on the big toe and which is supposed to prevent the akka from going away.

These rites vary a lot from one individual to the other, but they have a common principle. If someone begins to attend to his akka, he cannot abandon the worship during his lifetime, or else the akka will avenge itself.

Akka worship is strictly personal and is not bequeathed upon death.

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> 2. Although it happens that people receive as a name an akka name, sometimes accompanied by a qualificative, such as Lébikwaku.

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[551] Actually, each one knows his akka's name, which was revealed to him by his parents when he was a child; to this name is attached an akka kina or food prohibition relative to the akka.
[754] Both are carefully kept secret even from near relatives and friends, for knowing them could help the wisimã take possession of the akka. On this subject people often use the term gadu kina, as they say mi gadu instead of mi akka. [784] This term is easily confused with the prohibition imposed on the possessed [787] person by the god which incarnates itself in him; these are two very different notions.

[858] The akka kina is unique for each man. It is sought by the parents when the child is completely weaned. They try to [789] draw parallels between the foods he has eaten and the health disorders he may exhibit, and these suppositions are confirmed by divinatory procedures.

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782 A man does not ordinarily pray to his akka. He addresses prayer to it only if he is sick, to ask it for protection, or before leaving on a long trip, to ask it to watch over him. If he comes back safe and sound, he thanks it by making an offering to it, in the form of a bottle of syrup (switi sopi), which he turns upside down over his head.

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184 According to Mr. W. F. van Lier, the Djuka have the idea that the shadow (kaaka) is the visible image of the akka; the Boni do not appear to have this conception; one does not observe that they attach any importance whatever to whether a man's shadow passes over them; on the contrary, one must not step over a man lying on the ground, that might injure his akka.

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769 Beside the principal fraga tiki one sometimes sees sticks
778 bearing fragments of white cloth; they have been planted in honor of those ancestors who have demanded it.

The ceremonies at the fraga tiki have a very simple
769 character; prayers are said in the ordinary language and often
778 have the character of an intimate conversation. In the absence
782 of the head of the lineage, an old man pronounces them; while he speaks, an assistant makes the offering of water and tafia. Pouring water on the ground is a rite having as its purpose entering into contact with the ancestors: it is seen performed in funeral ceremonies, before beginning the interrogation of the yɔrka. The tafia is an offering in the literal sense of the term; at the time of the principal prayers being addressed to the ancestors, the offering of tafia is preceded by an offering of cane
[279] juice, kyẽɔ wata. Cane juice was the beverage on feast days in the times when the ancestors, at war with the Europeans, were bereft of tafia.

The prayer formulas most commonly used ask the ancestors to intercede with Masa gadu on behalf of their descendants: "Ancestors, watch over us, protect us, pray to Masa gadu for us so that...."

769 Possession by a yɔrka. It is taken for granted that the yɔrka of
an ancestor can enter into a member of his matrilineage and
787 reveal itself in the course of attacks of possession. This is a very
613 rare phenomenon. In 1958, in all the Boni country, only about ten people were known who bore thus the yɔorka of an ancestor. These attacks come on spontaneously, no cult having their provocation as its purpose. We were present in December, 1956 at one of these attacks in a young woman from Papaïston, Mili, about 20 years old. Since the day before, the yɔrka of an ancestor of the lineage dead for two generations had manifested itself in her intermittently; these attacks lasted several minutes;

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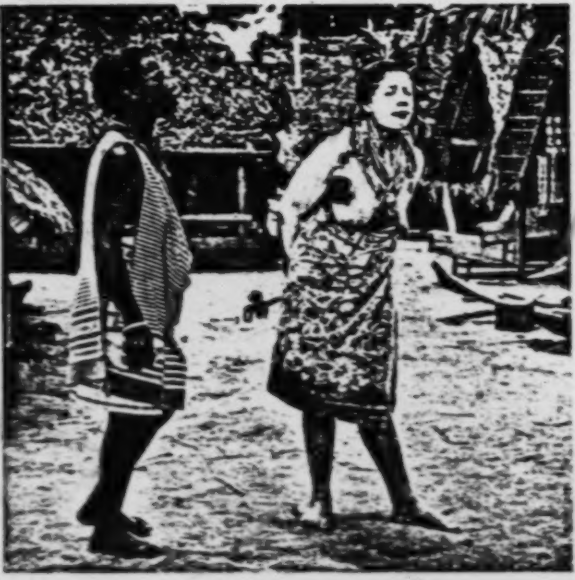

Fig. 26. Woman possessed by a Papa gadu god.

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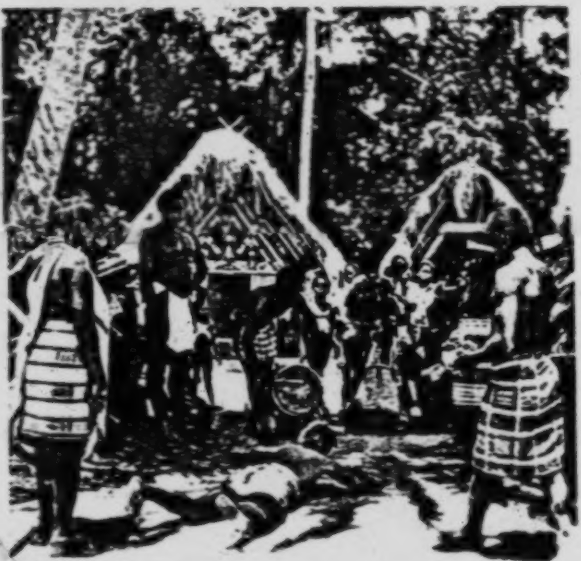
Fig. 27. Dance of possession (Papa gadu worship).



/221 cont./

775 "My nɛ̃mseki is So-and-So." Mr. W, F. van Lier, speaking of
828 the Djuka who have much clearer conceptions on religious
[184] questions, gives an important clarification: in 1915 Grand Man
Oséisi became incarnate in a newborn baby of the tribe, nevertheless he continues to be invoked as an ancestor before the
fraga tiki. It seems, then, that it is a case of certain elements
of the personality which are believed to be reincarnated, and
not of the yɔrka as a whole.

● 787 It is important to distinguish the nɛ̃mseki from possession
by a yɔrka. Possession by a yɔrka is an exceptional occurrence which is manifested in the form of trances, the yɔrka speaking through the mouth of its bearer; outside of these possessions, this yɔrka is believed to reside in the abode of the ancestors.

[613] A yɔrka can reveal itself thus only in a person of its
matrilineage.

775 The nɛ̃mseki, on the contrary, exists in all men. The
828 ancestor who is thus partially reincarnated is generally on the
paternal side, but this is not an absolute rule.

A man is not conscious of his nɛ̃mseki and is acquainted with it only because his parents have revealed it to him. This nɛ̃mseki does not manifest itself in anything in everyday life; it does not impose any kina whatever and does not ask for
[753] offerings. However, when a young child falls ill, divination
may reveal that it is the doing of the nɛ̃mseki which is indignant
[755] at being misunderstood. People hurry then, always with the
help of divination, to find out the name of the nɛ̃mseki, proceeding by elimination. As a general rule, they allow themselves to be guided by resemblances of physiognomy, birthmarks calling to mind, for example, certain scars of the dead ancestor.

It is believed that the older a man is when he dies, the more time he will allow to elapse before being reincarnated.

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--The Papa gadu (Vɔɔdʊ). The kunu that one of them exercises upon a lineage comes uniformly from the fact that in times past, one of the ancestors had inadvertently killed a dagowe snake (boa), usual bearer of the Papa gadu. For example, the snake might have perished in the burning of a clearing. Some time after, the god had possessed a member of the lineage and revealed that henceforth it would exercse a kunu;

--The Ampuku. The kunu of an Ampuku begins in an analogous way; in days gone by an ancestorhad, for example, cut a katu tree without performing the rites suitably, or had made a clearing in a place where an Ampuku was residing;

--The Kāntamasu (who call themselves Akɔlo), gods of the termitaries, much feared, may exercie a kunu if, before cutting a clearing, someone has, in spite of all his searching, allowed a termitary to escape him, whichthus was not the object of the indispensable rite;

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--Finally, the kunu may be broughtby a dead person's yɔrka. For example, a man of lineage A had once upon a time unjustly accused a man of lineage B. The latter committed suicide out of revenge. The meaning of this act is not the same as in Europe. It is not a question of making one's enemies live in shame and remorse, but by sacrificing one's life to cause an eternal vengeance to be wreaked upon one's enemies. Some time after the suicide, the yɔrka reveals itself in a man of his lineage and announces that it will pursue the members of lineage A eternally with its kunu.

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Thus the offenses which the kunu punishes are not moral sins as we understand them, but involuntary acts without inner meaning. The purifications and sacrifices demanded are likewise purely exterior acts.

/223 cont./

784 begin his instruction in order to become a suitable bearer. (If
613 this procedure were not carried out, the god would not cease
428 its kunu at all, and the possibility of entering into contact with
it and appeasing it would be lost. Besides, sooner or later it
would come back into a member of the lineage.)

784 The kunu strikes without regard to kinship ties, even if
613 kinship between the bearer of the god and the supposed victim
[602] is very distant. Ex.: The Papa gadu of Donasi (Papaïston lo)
struck a young woman, Gou, with illness in January, 1957.
Donasi and Gou are only relatives in the ninth degree. The
[782] members of the entire Papaïston lineage assembled to supplicate
[361] the god: even people of Wétiti village in the lower Maroni
came.

775 The kunu exercised by the yɔrka of a dead person has a
784 special importance in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks, for it has
613 profound repercussions on the relations among the lineages.

In principle, the yɔrka exercising a kunu has as bearer
[428] a living member of its own lineage, who will bequeath it at his
death. But it is also possible that the yɔrka may take as bearer
a member of the lineage upon which it exercises the kunu.

[782] In both cases, the rite to appease the yɔrka is the same;
the yɔrka can be invoked effectively only by the members of its
own lineage, since one can pray [illegible] least in principle) only to
one's own maternal ancestors.

When matrilineage A is struck by the kunu exercised by a
yɔrka of matrilineage B, its members thereupon go to consult
the elders of matrilineage A /sic/ and ask them to try to calm
[769] the anger of their ancestor. The members of lineage A assemble
[778] around the fraga tiki of lineage B, in back of the elders of this
[787] lineage, in the presence of the bearer of the yɔrka, who calls
on his gita, goes into trances and prophesying. The yɔrka
[782] usually asks for an offering of cane juice and tafia, which is
made at the foot of the /224/ fraga tiki by the elders of lineage
B (for the rite to be efficacious, the offering must have been
furnished by lineage A).

/224 cont./

784 Kunu of the Dju lineage. The Dju lineage in 1958 was affected
613 by four kunu:

776 --An Ampuku which has exercised its vengeance since
787 time immemorial, to the point where the origin of this kunu
is no longer remembered, its bearers being Dabisa (G25) and Adyidya (E19), two women about 50 years old. This Ampuku formerly had as its bearer an ancestor named Agoabuchi, who died about 1940. Two or three years after his death, it manifested itself in Dabisa;

--A Papa gadu named Adawa which has also pursued the lineage with a pitiless vengeance since the time of the great ancestors. It revealed itself to the preceding generation in an ancestress named Sapiké (D5), and a long time after her death it passed into Pamasa (E26), a woman of 35. This kunu has grown worse since /225/ two other Papa gadu revealed themselves in recent years in two women named Kulina (F9) and Diana (E9). They declared that they were the descendants of the first one and that they came in support of it;

784 --A yɔrka whose name nobody wanted to tell us because
613 they were so afraid of it. It is that of a man of the Awara Bakka
775 lineage, who committed suicide two or three generations ago
787 when he was unjustly accused of a crime by a man of the Dju
[762] lineage. Since then, this yɔrka has been exterminating the Dju
lineage little by little. Its bearer in 1958 was an old woman of the Awara Bakka lineage, named Namu;

784 --A Kantamasu since, a very long time ago, an ancestress
613 whose name is forgotten inadvertently destroyed a termitary
776 while burning a clearing. It had as bearer a very old woman
787 named Wima (E3) († 1957), and it manifested itself also in
Ata (F2).

784 Thus, in this group, the maleficent gods had exclusively
613 women as bearers; out of about 20 adult women, seven were
787 participating in the functioning of the kunu.
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/225 cont. /

784 One sees from this example how the influence of women,
613 exerted in arbitrary fashion, in a domain placed outside of
● 787 custom and ordinary social life, weighs on the life of the
562 group.

784 Kunu of the Dipélu lineage. The situation of the Dipélu
614 lineage with respect to the kunu is particularly interesting.
571 Although split for perhaps 100 years into two separate groups,
Dipélu I (L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu villages) and Dipélu II
(Kormotibo and Asisi-Dip. II villages), this group still constitutes
an undivided unit with respect to the kunu. Neither time nor
[484] distance (it takes more than a week of traveling to make the
round trip between L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu) has been able to
break it up. The Apatu people come very often (at least some
[755] of them) to be present at the collective prayers which take
place at L'Enfant Perdu to appease a kunu in order to cure a
sick person.

784 The oldest kunu ("since Africa") is that of a Papa gadu
614 god whose bearer was ○ Dika (Dip. I, D10, † 1951) and which
776 passed after her death into ○ Péêchina (Dip. I, E42, L'Enfant
[787] Perdu village). This kunu strikes indiscriminately the people
of L'Enfant Perdu, Apatu, Kormotibo, Asisi-Dip. II, and the
Dipélu fraction residing in Boniville. To it, these past years,
[761] have been attributed the death of ○ Way (Dip. I, E6, living
[753] in Boniville), the illness of △ Akwali (Dip. II, F7, Kormotibo
village) and of ○ Bongo (same village).

784 Another very old kunu is the one exercised by the yɔrka
775 of a Surinam Creole who had settled with the Dipélu people a
614 very long time ago. He was suspected of sorcery and killed.
[683] Since then his yɔrka comes back regularly to exterminate the
Dipélu.

/225 cont./

784 Having no known lineage (his family, if he had any, was
775 in Surinam), it had taken people of the Dipélu lineage as
614 bearers. The last was Δ Denis † in 1938. Since Denis'
● 787 death, it no longer has a bearer. The questioning of the dead
reveals that they died by its kunu. The members of the two
[782] fractions of the lineage meet together (at least two or three
members of each village come) to supplicate it.

784 A third kunu, very interesting in origin and supposed
614 action, /226/ in 1957 was borne by Kwau (Dip. I, E1, Kotika
village). It results from the killing of an anaconda snake by
Apatu † (Dip. I, C1), companion of the explorer Crevaux
when he was traveling to /in/ Brazil. Upon contact with
Europeans Apatu had become a freethinker and was no longer
[753] observing the laws of his people. Among the later victims of
this kunu was counted Kwami (Dip. II, F4, Kormotibo village)
[755] who, gravely ill, had had to go to L'Enfant Perdu where the
god had been invoked for him and offerings made. The death
[761] of Manga (Dip. I, E5, Boniville, † about 1930) was particu-
larly attributed to it.

No other kunu has revealed itself in Apatu village since its founding in 1882.

784 A fourth kunu concerning all the Dipélu has as bearers
614 women of the Dipélu II group. It results from the inadvertent
776 murder of a Papa gadu whose bearer was a dagowe snake killed
787 in the course of the nivrée /fishing/ of a pool by Akonté
562 † (Dip. II, B1), transmitted to Kondo †, then to Alama
(Dip. II, E1).

Since then Papa gadu have revealed themselves in ○ Apaïta (Dip. II, F9, Kormotibo village) and in ○ Kaala (Dip. II, G28, Asisi-Dip. II village). They declared themselves to be the descendants of the first and to come in support of it.

/226 cont./

784 Finally, a fifth kunu is threatening to show itself. This
182 is a remarkable affair which clarifies at the same time the
legal and religious conceptions of the Refugee Blacks.

672 About 1918, a stupid accident which happened at
Dagouédé (gun which went off by itself at the moment when
it was being stowed in a boat) caused the death of a girl,
Santonia, daughter of Kuluba (Aw.B.1). The unwitting
perpetrator of the accident was Kwau (Dip. I. Apatu village).
[692] There were people in the Awara Bakka lineage who accused
him of having done it on purpose, but the grand man judged
that he was innocent and the affair was shelved.

784 Now in April, 1957, Kiboya (Dip. II), a young woman
614 of 25, was attacked by a fit of possession. It was Santonia's
775 yɔrka which was supposed to reveal itself in her. It declared
● 787 that it was going to exercise a kunu on Dipélu. It was not
claiming that Kwau had killed her on purpose and even asked
the Awara Bakka not to make reprisals.

628 Nevertheless, full of fury, a party of Awara Bakka went
the next day to attack the village of L'Enfant Perdu, demolish-
614 ing a certain number of huts and pursuing the inhabitants,
some of whom took refuge in the water and others in the bush.
There were, however, no serious blows.

The next day they went to attack Kormotibo in the same way. It is to be noted that only after that did they think of blaming Kwau, who was then living at Wacapou. But the grand man had intervened in the meantime to re-establish peace.

In both cases the façades of several shacks were smashed and two men, Bonana and Amatodja, who had run less fast than the others, were struck symbolically.

/226 cont./

628 The members of the Dipélu lineage did not believe a
614 word of this affair, convinced that Kiboya, a proud and scheming
784 woman, had pretended the gita to make herself interesting.
787 Nevertheless, to bring back peace, they decided to go to Asisi
156 and to ask pardon in front of the fraga tiki, pouring tafia,
769 asking the ancestors not to take vengeance, the living being
778 reconciled.

784 /227/ (Note that in this affair, the yorka manifests itself in a
614 member of the lineage on which it exercises the kunu.)
775

784 Kunu of the Awara Bakka lineage. The Awara Bakka lineage
784 does not form a unit with respect to the kunu, and the situation
614 of its fractions is particularly interesting. This lineage includes:
613 --A principal fraction (Aw.B.1);

--A fraction whose kinship ties with the first are forgotten (Aw.B.2), whose position with respect to the kunu we have not been able to define.

--Finally, a group descended from Anèta, Djuka woman, wife of Pééyon † (Aw.B.1) settled in Asisi with her descendants in uterine line. We have called this group Aw.B.3. It has a separate kunu originating in the Djuka village of Tabiki where Anèta came from.

784 The Awara Bakka I, all living in Asisi village, had to
787 our knowledge three kunu in 1957:
776 --One exercised by a Papa gadu god, borne up to 1957
613 by ○ Kuluba (Aw.B.1, D1). At her death in April, 1957,
428 she bequeathed it, contrary to custom, to a person of another
fraction, Summa (Aw.B.3). But the god did not ratify this
legacy and, in January, 1958; it manifested itself in ○ Léna
(Aw.B.1, F02), thus remaining in the same linea[illegible]

/227 cont./

784 --A second, very old kunu is exercised by a yòrka of the
775 Dipèlu II lo, Gy...., dead so long that he cannot be placed on
● 787 the genealogical table; it, too, had as bearer a member of the
619 lineage on which it was exercising the kunu. ○ Akumuyé
614 (Aw.B.1, D17) † 1957.

Thus the Awara Bakka and Dipèlu lineages exercise the kunu reciprocally one against the other;

784 --A third kunu of recent origin is exercised by a Papa
776 gadu god which had as bearer in 1957 ○ Irma (Aw.B.1, E37).
613 It results from the inadvertent killing of a Dagowe /sic/ snake
[789] by Δ Taewa, Irma's brother. At the end of 1957 this kunu
[753] had yet brought on only illnesses of such a kind that people
could still hope to exorcise it.

784 The Aw.B.3 group has a special kunu of its own and
613 considers itself out of reach of the kunu of the Aw.B.1.

Anèta, originating in the Djuka village of Tabiki, is
subject to the kunu of that lineage as are all her descendants in
[782] uterine line. On occasion of serious illnesses the latter have
sometimes had to go to Tabiki village to supplicate the kunu.

[776] This kunu is the one of a god borne by Akanté, Anèta's
daughter. In September, 1956, Summa, Akanté's daughter,
[787] was sick. The god revealed that this was its doing. It was
[782] supplicated (the other fractions joined the group) and she then
got well.

613 Kunu of the Afi lineage. The descendants of Afi † (woman
621 coming from the tribe of the Bakabuchi of Surinam) live for the
most part in Asisi in close symbiosis with the /228/ Awara
Bakka lineage. They are in a situation analogous to that of
Anèta's descendants (Aw.B.3) but, perhaps by the simple fact
of their number, they form a more individualized unit.

/228 cont./

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They are the object of three *kunu*:

--One exercised by a *Papa gadu* god whose bearer up into 1956 was Kotoïda (✝ Oct. 1956), who bequeathed it to ○ Mani (Afi lineage, d12).

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--The other exercised by a *yorka* of the Lapé lineage. This *kunu* dates from about 80 years ago: Alémin (Afi lineage, b3, Kormotibo village), 80 years old in 1957, had when he was young cut a clearing in a place which was found to be an old abandoned Boni cemetery (opposite Maripasoula). Some [789] time afterward, a *yorka* revealed itself in a woman of the Lapé lineage, saying that it was exercising a *kunu* against the family of the sacrilegious person.

[761] It is to this *yorka*, whose bearer is M... (L2, Boniville), that the death of Kotoïda in October, 1956 is especially attributed.

--A third *kunu* is exercised by A...., of the Papaïston 2 [684] lineage. A... had committed *pikado*. Surprised by Alémin (Afi lineage), he had paid the latter to obtain his silence. [762] But Alémin had talked. Dishonored, A... committed suicide with a gunshot; some time afterward his *yorka* revealed itself in Alémin; it exercises a *kunu* on this lineage.

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Situation of the other lineages with respect to the kunu. The Papaïston lineage is divided into two groups: Papaïston 1 (the principal one) and Papaïston 2, of which there remain only three living members: two women and one young man. This remainder of a lineage continues to bear its own *kunu*, which is unique and separate from that of the principal group.

The principal group forms a unit with respect to the *kunu*.

The Lapé lineage, cut from the point of view of genealogy into two pieces, forms a unit with respect to the *kunu*. We [114] have been able to collect only fragmentary information on the various *kunu* of this village.

/228 cont./

784 A kunu is exercised by a Dipéla yorka, borne in 1958 by
775 a Loka woman. It is invoked before the faaga tiki of l'Enfant
778 Perdu village (Dipéla I). Sometimes a broko dɛ is celebrated
769 for it in the same forms as the ceremony of the eighth day
613 after death.

784 We have likewise not been able to collect complete
613 information on the kunu of the Kotika lineage. This lineage,
114 divided into three fractions, forms a unit with respect to the
kunu.

784 A kunu is exercised by the yorka of a Surinam Creole
613 assassinated in former times by a member of the lineage. Its
775 bearer in 1958 was Todo (K1, E68), a man of the Kotika lo
789 living in Boniville. In 1958 a young woman of the lineage,
[761] Awini (K1, E37), died suddenly; the yorka revealed that it
[684] had struck Awini because she had a liaison with Sintamann
(K3, E145), thus committing pikadu. The idea of the collective
responsibility of the lineage is so deeply accepted by the Boni
that the near relatives of the dead woman did not reproach
Sintamann at all.

784 /229/ A yorka of the Kotika lineage may exercise a kunu on
613 the Djuka. This is the case of an affair going back to 1950;
775 a young woman died some time after having a serious discussion
761 with a Djuka woman who had hit her. Deaths among the Djuka
619 these last years had been attributed to its vengeance.

It seems that there is no other kunu exercised by a Djuka
784 upon a Boni lineage and vice versa. This is surprising, con-
619 sidering the fights which in former times set the two nations
613 against each other.

The Djuka and Saramaka living isolated in the midst
621 of the Boni know their kunu, which were revealed to them in
784 childhood. In case of sickness, they employ divinatory pro-
[755] cedures in order to know what kunu is concerned, then they
[613] make offerings. But in case of serious illness, they are forced
to go back to the village of origin of their lineage.

/229 cont./

784 the Afi lineage to be thrashed symbolically for not having paid
613 sufficient attention to the warnings of the yɔrka which had
672 already made Kotoïda sick several times: by their negligence they bore part of the responsibility for Kotoïda's death. Although the Afi and the Awara Bakka live together and regard themselves as members of one community, there was no question whatever of thrashing the Awara Bakka, and that because, not being subject to the same kunu, they bore no responsibility for this death. /230/

Likewise it is taken for granted that the descendants of Anèta (Aw.B.3) do not share the legal responsibility of the Awara Bakka proper (fractions 1 and 2). The fact that Anéta was the wife of Pééyon, captain of the Aw.B., and that her descendants are completely integrated into the life of the village, does not modify this legal situation at all. At the time of the brawl between the Dipélu and the Awara Bakka in 1948, the Aw.B.3 were not taken to task, any more than the members of the Afi lineage.

771 The relations of the Boni with the entities which are believed to pursue them are most interesting. They seek only to appease the divinity, to calm it provisionally, and to live with it in a state of armed peace, if one may say so.

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787 When divination has shown that a certain calamity was due to the kunu (sometimes the divinity in question reveals it immediately, through the mouth of its bearer, before being interrogated), it is asked why it struck: it always indicates a precise reason: usually it appears to be inspired by arbitrariness
[776] and a pitiless despotism. The Refugee Blacks are not surprised at this, for thus it is that they imagine the lower gods.

784 In 1948, A..., of the Dju lineage, fell ill; he felt
787 violent pains in his legs. Divination showed that it was the
776 doing of the Kɔ̃ntamasu, which was exercising its kunu upon

/230 cont./
784 the lineage; questioned, this god declared that it had something
787 to complain about in the bad condition of the house which the
776 members of the lineage had erected to it on its order; the roof
of leaves had not been changed and it was raining through.

784 It happens also, but as an exception, that the god has
684 sanctioned an offense against morals or more precisely, against
the social law, such as the breaking of an interdiction, *pikadu*
(incest in the wider sense, an offense against exogamy). It
is necessary to understand that in the thought of the Refugee
Blacks, *incest unleashes the existing kunu but does not create
a new kunu.*

In October, 1952, Dolo, a young man of 25 of the
Awara Bakka *lo*, died almost suddenly. Divination revealed
[787] that he had been killed by the *kunu* (it was a *Papa gadu* which
[761] had intervened) in order to sanction an offense committed
[613] some time previously by another member of the *lo* named P....
The latter, a notoriously depraved individual, had committed
incest with his own sister.

784 When the divinity has made known through the mouth
776 of its bearer the causes of its act, the assembled members of
782 the lineage implore it, ask it not to pursue its vengeance; the
[787] divinity then requires an offering: for example, if it is a
Papa gadu, it will require bottles of beer, some red and white
cloth which will be immersed in a given place in the river.
It may also require dances in its honor, celebrated by the
other possessed people in the village. If it is an *Ampuku*, it
will demand rum, dark-blue cloth which will be exposed in
a remote place in the forest. An offering of this kind represents a relatively small sum, even for the Boni (several
thousand francs in 1952). The god then declares itself appeased.
But it does not pardon and it will resume /231/ its vengeance
[183] at the first cause. Thus the Boni have hope only in a rigorous
776 observance of customary law and the rites. There are divinities
787 which appeared to be thus appeased for a long time and to

/231 cont./

776 which people do not hesitate to come to ask for remedies or
787 opinions, in spite of the evil they have done to the lineage and perhaps will do tomorrow. It is even allowable to wonder whether people do not prefer to consult the most wicked divinities, for they are believed to be stronger.

784 The kunu focuses, turns aside toward high purposes the
771 blind forces of superstition, fear, and rancor. Several authors
114 who have written on the Refugee Blacks have stated that
754 calamities were almost unfailingly attributed to sorcery (wisi). This is a grave error due to the fact that they believed they could transpose to the Refugee Blacks what is observed among the Creole populations of Surinam. If this were true, no
[787] positive social bond could exist. We believe we can assert that among the Refugee Blacks divination lays the blame on sorcery in only scarcely a tenth of the misfortunes. Here,
784 among other examples, are several typical cases concerning
[114] Boni who worked with us or whom we have known especially well:

[753] --In 1948, Fintiman (Dju) falls ill (violent pains in the
[776] legs); kunu of a Kãntamam.

[752] --In 1948, Galmo (Papaïston) is accidentally hurt (gun backfire): kunu.

[753] --In 1949, Diolè, captain of the Djù lo, is smitten with
[761] hemiplegia and remains paralyzed. He dies in 1951: kunu
[776] of a Papa gadu.

761 --In 1950, a Saramaka is killed in a hunting accident (a gun in poor condition went off by itself): [illegible] (accident).

[764] --In 1951, Kanayen (Kotika) drowns while sailing at night on the river: wisi.

[784] --In 1951, Loka (Dju) dies at the age of 70: kunu of an
[776] Ampuku.

752 --In 1951, F... (Dju) is seriously hurt by the falling of
784 a branch while cutting his clearing: kunu of a yɔrka.
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/232 cont./

775 It is important not to confuse the kunu with the sufferings
784 which other divinities can arbitrarily make men undergo. The
776 kunu has a systematic character. But a divinity theoretically
beneficent, and which has come into a man after being
called on, may also from time to time bring misfortunes if
such is its whim of the moment.

752 In 1949, G... (Dju) was busy cooking a crab in the
776 house of his mother D... A machete which was fastened to
784 the wall suddenly detached itself and wounded him in the right
hand. Now his mother had an Ampuku which had imposed
● [787] the crab on her as kina. This Ampuku, immediately called
[428] on, revealed that it really was it which had struck G..., for
it did not like to see D...'s son eat crab (note that G... was
not at all held to the observance of this kina, for no kina is
transmitted from mother to son).

784 Neither must the kunu exercised by a yɔrka be confused
775 with the vengeance that a dead person can exercise against
613 the members of his own lineage in order to punish them for
969 having neglected their duties.

Punishment inflicted by an ancestor of the lineage seems
for the Boni to be a notion distinct from that of the kunu.
Vengeance exercised by a yɔrka upon its own lineage is regarded as exceptional and devoid of the inexorable and
definitive character of the kunu, but they assume it to be
[962] possible. They cited to us the case of Yali (Loka), who
committed suicide when accused of sorcery by the people
[753] of his lineage. Since then, his yɔrka has caused sicknesses
[761] and deaths in his own village.

776 Conversely, a god which exercises the kunu upon a
784 lineage may in certain cases intervene in favor of this lineage
613 if such is its whim of the moment. Thus the death of Diamanti
[761] (Aw.B.2, Asisi village, † in 1955) is attributed to the god
which exercises the kunu on the village of L'Enfant Perdu and
whose bearer was Péèchina. Diamanti had wronged someone
of this village and the god had intervened against her.

/232 cont./

787 In a general way, they consider that the bearer of a god
784 exercising the *kunu* has nothing to fear from it personally if he
776 rigorously observes the *kina* which have been imposed upon
him. On the other hand, this god will punish any injury to
[562] its bearer. Thus these bearers (almost always old women) live
[888] surrounded by respect and fear.

784 /233/ Observations in January, 1958 (misfortunes attributed to
769 vengeance of ancestors on their own lineage).

613 Do (Lapé) is taken ill on January 7, 1958 with a violent
775 attack of dysentery. The same day his five-year-old son is
grievously hurt at the wharf by falling on a broken bottle.
[787] Alarmed by this coincidence, the members of the Lapé *lo*
assemble and proceed to question a possessed person. The latter
reveals that it is the doing of an old woman of the lineage,
Ataia, dead for two years. Several lineage members have already
been sick from this; the dead woman wanted to sanction
offenses committed by the people of the lineage.

The same day in Boniville, Klémenti (Dju), to whom I
am recounting this affair, tells me that before the lifting of
mourning for his mother Béniti, he and his sisters were sick.
[787] Divination showed that it was the doing of Béniti, who wished
to hasten the celebration of the ceremony.

784 The *kunu* and social peace among the Boni. Role of the grand
775 man. The *kunu* exercised by a *yɔrka* creates very strange relations
613 among the Boni lineages. As blind and arbitrary as the
591 vengeance attributed to the *yɔrka* may be, the Boni have the
sense of the legal unity of the lineage too much for any resentment
to exist: "They are killing our family..."; and yet the
two lineages find themselves henceforth irreparably bound together.
[780] The victims of the *kunu* can no longer get along without
people of the lineage of the *yɔrka* which pursues them with its
vengeance, since they alone, by their prayers, can appease
temporarily the anger of their ancestor. One conceives of the

/234 cont./

695 Fist-fighting is practiced also between individuals as a test for justification. If someone is unjustly accused of theft, this is the first idea which occurs to him, even before the oath before Odun. On this subject the Refugee Blacks have a conception analogous to that of the ancient Europeans, according to which God will come to the aid of the innocent person, giving him the strength of ten. This fighting, too, is subject to precise rules; it can be indulged in only publicly, in a village, never in the bush or on the river.

In spite of the importance attached to the oath before Odun, Boni custom does not make provision for any test for 628 613 justification having a recognized legal value. This is what makes the symbolic battle indispensable. Intervention is then asked of the head of a neutral lineage in order to restore peace. If no death or calamity takes place allowing /235/ belief in the unappeased vengeance of a dead person, the affair is very quickly forgotten. For example, in examining the table of marriages among the various lineages, one ascertains that there are a number of normal unions between the Dipélu and the Awara Bakka.

643 692 In these kinds of affairs the grand man has two very exact functions:

--To reveal pretense;

--To intervene as supreme arbiter in case of necessity.

● [787] [775] Each time that someone is attacked by a fit of possession and claims to speak in the name of a yɔrka coming to exercise a kunu, the lineage head conducts him to the grand man who makes sure that there is no question of pretense.

643 775 787 695 *,The grand man, in the thought of the Boni, has the power to compel any yɔrka to manifest itself.

He conducts the person concerned to the fraga tiki and invokes the yɔrka. If pretense is involved, the individual will not be able to articulate a syllable. If it is true possession, the yɔrka will speak through his mouth.

643 /235 cont./

775 A few years ago a Kormotibo woman was thus confounded.
787 She had wanted to pretend possession by a *yɔrka* in order to
695 blackmail another family.

Grand Man Difu recently forbade the bequeathing of gods
784 and *yɔrka* exercising the *kunu* (1). People will wait for them
428
643
[787]
to manifest themselves of their own accord. That will reduce the risks of pretense.

643 The grand man's lineage does not exercise any kunu upon
613 another lineage, and no kunu is exercised upon it. For the Boni
775 this is a fundamental idea, because the grand man is precisely
784 the supreme recourse in case of persistent calamities attributed
to the *yɔrka* of a dead person. The grand man has the power to exorcise all the dead Boni. If his lineage exercised a *kunu* or were victim of one, he would be judge and litigant at the same time.

When, with the death of Grand Man Difu, the Dikan lineage is extinct, and when the function passes to another lineage, consideration of the *kunu* exercised by the lineages upon one another will be determinative in the choice of his successor.

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Divination; Premonition; Dreams

182 *Divination*. It plays an essential role among the Refugee Blacks as in all animistic societies. Individuals have recourse to it to inspire all important discussions; in large measure one can say that for them it takes the place of will and conscience.

1. Let us recall that the dead are questioned on this subject as for the apportionment of the rest of their heritage.

/235 cont./

787 626 182 571 But divination is more than that; the interpretation it gives of the events of daily life is the very mover of the animistic society; presenting calamities /236/ as the punishment of offenses against customary law, it is constantly vitalizing that law, conserving its practical value and its efficacity. What it expresses is not the hidden influence of chiefs or priests -- there are in fact neither chiefs nor priests among the Boni -- but the very consensus of the group, the deep feeling it has of its unity.

787 There are two large categories of divination:

The first consists of calling on a divinity through the medium of its bearer. For that, one applies to a person (of his [791] lineage if possible) who has a *gadu*. This is a service which is rarely refused. This person employs the appropriate procedure for calling his *gita* and enters into trances. The god speaks, the question is put to it; if it is well disposed, it may give the explanation or the advice requested. For example, one asks for advice before looking for another sector to make his clearings.

787 776 Suggestible as the Boni may be, they do not fail to perceive that all the gods interrogated do not give the same directions. So they think that certain ones are stronger than others; there are people whose *gita* is considered to be particularly [791] good, others whom they have stopped consulting entirely. The defunct head of Kotika village, Bayo$_4$ used to have a *gita* so remarkable that people would come from very far to consult it.

[829] [178] The general opinion is, furthermore, that nowadays everything is degenerating and that good *gita* are no longer seen as in the olden days.

787 [791] These consultations involve only a very modest remuneration, a bottle of tafia at most (1). If it is not a matter of a

1. The remuneration of the possessed person is in question; the god always demands a payment for itself, of variable size according to its whim.

/236 cont./

787 very serious question, the asker contents himself with going to interrogate a divinity in which he has confidence. If, when put to the test, the advice turns out to be bad, he goes to consult others and if he obtains the same advice from two different directions, he stops there. If not, he appeals to the elders of his village to bring into play the processes of divination which they alone know. [888] [791]

[428] A second category of divinatory procedures consists in the use of "remedies," whose origin is unknown and which are transmitted like a personal belonging.

[824] The process reputed to be the surest, in which everybody has confidence, is called *pusu*. The instrument is composed simply of a rope made of fibers of the *Mauritia* (2) palm tree which has been dipped in an infusion of herbs; it is stretched horizontally between two stakes. The elder brings near it a machete blade heated red-hot, at the same time asking the question. If the answer is positive, the rope is cut when the iron has scarcely touched it. If the answer is no, they state that the red-hot iron remains in contact with the rope for an appreciable length of time without the rope's being cut.

They will say for example: *efu ca Ampuku siki X, a how a 'I mu do: fosi a koti:* If it is an Ampuku which is making X sick, the machete must cut (the rope) before (even) reaching it.

[439] 2. Palm tree which grows in the coastal savannas and whose fibers are bought from the Galibi Indians. The word *pusu*, like *gita*, *kandu*, *mula*, is of Congolese origin. In Kikongo, *mpuuru* = raffia palm tree.

/237/

787 In this way they put a series of questions entailing yes or no answers and which narrow down the problem more and more.

791 For this divinatory procedure, they pay the man who has brought it into play three liters of tafia, two pieces of cloth, and one machete.

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695 This procedure is put into play to confound thieves and adulterers. The plaintiff publicly calls on the accused to come and undergo the test: Mi ɔ tya yu go a sweli! If he refuses, it is the equivalent of a confession.

In 1947, Liki (Aw.B.), accused of having stolen 20 grams of gold by a man from Loka, was thus put to the test. The rope was not cut. He was declared innocent and it was the plaintiff who had to pay the price of the test.

In 1950, the uncle of Tabayé (Dip. I) accused him of having committed adultery with his wife. He denied it, but he was put to the test which gave a positive result; he confessed immediately and begged his uncle's pardon. Then they were reconciled. Of course it was he who paid the price of the test.

787 Another important divinatory procedure is the Kumĕnti bui (ring of Kumĕnti). This is a surprising form of divination by pendulum. The ring, which is made of fibers, is ordinarily kept hidden by its owner. Very few people have any. The ring, suspended at the end of a string, is put in oscillation. Its owner puts a question to it. If the answer is affirmative, it oscillates from right to left. If it is negative, it describes a circle.

725 Another procedure is sometimes used after a sacrifice to know whether the god has received it favorably: it consists of killing a rooster to examine the color of its testicles: if they are found to be black, the sacrifice has not been accepted.

791 /237 cont./

688 Not just anyone may resort to divination on behalf of
888 someone else: only the eldest have the right to do it, and it has happened that the grand man punished offenders severely.

777 *Fate*. The Refugee Blacks do not attribute all misfortunes
[752] to suprahuman causes. They have the notion of natural accident, *ɔŋgɔɔku*. They say *ɔŋgɔɔku miti mi*, or again *ogi miti mi*,
[761] misfortune met me. They also accept the idea of natural death. They usually regard as natural death that of the very old, the infirm from birth, and sickly children.

[787] Divination blames fate in ten to 20 per cent of accidents.
[792] It is the usual explanation for hunting accidents.

772 /238/

Magic Forces

As we have shown, the Refugee Blacks consider beings and things as a world of forces capable of acting on one another, outside of time and space, according to laws which men cannot understand but of which they believe they have a partial and empirical knowledge transmitted by tradition since the
754 time of the ancestors. They distinguish negative magic forces,
789 *wisi*, which have the effect of diminishing the vital force of men, which makes them sick or kills them, and positive magic forces, *ɔbia*, which come from the gods: the *ɔbia* comes to increase the vital force of men, giving them protection, immunity, or knowledge. But no power is in essence a principle of good or evil; nothing is impossible for him who knows the formulas; this is why the magic of the Refugee Blacks is reduced to a perpetual and indecisive struggle between *ɔbia* and *wisi*.

754 *Wisi*. *Wisi* is sorcery in the African sense of the term, that is,
[873] the use of magic procedures to harm others; *wisi* is for the Refugee Blacks the pre-eminently criminal act, at the same time against morals and against society. The struggle against

/239 cont./

754 Trial for sorcery does not exist among the Boni, but a
787 procedure exists which allows for pinning down suspicions.

After each death the dead person is asked the question: Is it wisi that killed thee? The question is put last (they first ask kunu, then fyo-fyo /see p. 398/).

If it is wisi, they ask: Is it such-and-such a family? (In general it is in the lineage itself), then the names of the lineage members are uttered successively until there is a positive response.

754 The one who is thus accused of wisi can be summoned
695 to justify himself before the gran man, but that can only have the character of an investigation and not a trial. The suspected individual may not be challenged. They accept the fact that it is only a matter of presumption and that the dead accuser can lie, pursuing vengeance beyond the grave.

The Refugee Blacks declare that there is no certainty about wisi.

754 A remarkable principle of customary law is that if a
613 member of a matrilineage /240/ is believed to have killed one
692 of his "brothers," the judiciary power of the Boni cannot interfere. It is an affair purely within the lineage.

754 Thus no one can be challenged or expelled for an act of sorcery. If one suspects somebody strongly, one will avoid him, one will turn the cold shoulder to him, all the time remaining polite, but one will not show anything. To this principle is attached a very noble idea, that of the interdiction of vengeance. He who is victim of sorcery must under no circumstances do countersorcery. He can only ask for the protection of the obia. One must not under any circumstances ask a divinity or his ancestors to harm his aggressor.

754 Among the Refugee Blacks there is only one sanction
775 against the wisiman: They will necessarily be found out at their
787 death. The yorka of the dead person, interrogated by the elders,

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775 /240 cont./
789 will be obliged to confess: "It is I who killed So-and-So and
So-and-So." They immediately inform the grand man, who
754 orders the usual procedure against *wisimã*: Ceremonies are
766 suspended, the body is transported by boat to a place reserved
for cursed people, downstream from Boni country, and it is
abandoned in the bush without being buried. Grand Man Difu
is trying to modify this custom and to compel burial of *wisimã*
in a special cemetery, but without great success up to now, it
seems.

754 There is no *broko dę*. The spouse may remarry immediate-
765 ly. Since the property of the deceased are presumed to be ill-
768 gotten, inheritance is cancelled. The house is destroyed and
thrown into the water, the boat abandoned to the current.
Personal belongings of the deceased are turned over to the grand
man who distributes them to whom he wishes.

The near relatives of persons thus designated are overcome with shame but can say nothing. Not a bit of responsibility is imputed to them.

754 How does society protect itself against the sorcery of the
775 *wisimã* from beyond the grave? According to Grand Man Difu,
784 this is a problem which does not come up. The *wisimã* has
been killed by Odun as punishment for his crimes. Since every
being draws its force from the divine, he has no more force, he
is destroyed as a being, he is no longer anything but an empty
shadow incapable of doing harm.

754 In fact, among the Refugee Blacks these trials of dead
775 people are very rare. Whereas about 15 persons die per year
712 on the average in Boni country, including about ten adults,
[165] in the last 20 years (1) only about 20 persons were revealed to
be *wisimã*.

1. Disregarding the period 1957-1959 when a definite fresh outbreak of the fear of *wisimã* was observed.

/240 cont./

754 775 be wisimã. We were able to draw up the list of these from information from diverse sources which agreed very well.

787 In nearly every case persons were concerned who had already been accused, during their lifetime, of being wisimã; and on whom suspicions had been directed either by reason of their solitary life and irascible character or as a consequence of a series of coincidences.

754 828 In general, they tend to accuse of wisi any individual who systematically isolates himself, shows ill will in the observation of customary law, or shows himself particularly selfish, irascible, or jealous.

754 648 /241/ They tend also to suspect those who in their youth had abandoned the tribe for years to settle among the Creoles, and those who frequent the Creoles of the region, known as quimboiseurs, or who go too often to Saint Laurent or Paramaribo to consult lukumã (clairvoyants) (1).

754 434 828 Also deemed suspect of wisi is anyone who gets rich too quickly or shows an immoderate love of money. A hard-working man who earns his living in broad daylight is never accused of wisi. But the one who engages in trade is suspect. It is thought, for example, that G...., who furnished a shop and earns much money, is a "pledged man." It is said also of F...., a fishing contractor particularly greedy for profit. But neither has been accused openly.

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1. Consulting a clairvoyant is not contrary to the laws of Odun. Infringement of these laws begins when one claims to act upon other people.

/242 cont./

754 764 ●787 Of course he was recognized as a *wisimã* by the first adjuration made to his body carried in the *papay* on the heads of two men: "If thou art a *wisi* man, do not come toward us." The dead man drew back. /.../

[784] /243/Continuation of the interrogation showed that he had not yet killed anybody, but that he had been killed by Odun when he was preparing to kill someone of his lineage.

754 755 648 The persecutors of Agyémési, contrary to their hope, did not recover after his death from the maladies which they were attributing to his sorcery; that did not shake their conviction in the least. They left for Paramaribo to have themselves treated by a Creole magician (for the Surinam Creoles, who practice white magic and black magic indiscriminately, are by this fact reputed to be more expert than the Refugee Blacks in combating the effects of *wisi*).

754 [762] [784] 173 683 784 [178] In recounting this story to us, the grand man told us that it is always necessary to be cautious with accusations of *wisi*, because one can never be sure. A man unjustly accused can commit suicide and pursue his accusers with his *kunu* (most of the Boni state that they would do so in such a case). In former times, the barbarous punishments in use in Africa were applied to revealed *wisimã*: they were burned alive. But people tell that one of them, some months afterward, undertook against his accusers' lineage a *kunu* which still lasts today. He had been wrongly condemned! It is through fear of the *kunu* more than through care for humanity, that these punishments have been abolished.

754 [152] It certainly seems that the constant fear of the *wisimã* in which the Boni live is only a collective hallucination, and that rare indeed are those who dare to indulge in practices which might draw upon them such terrible social and religious sanctions. As for these practices themselves, they appear to be without any real content, and the misfortunes attributed to them are

/245 cont./

754 766 Burial of a wisimɛ. We transcribe here an account given by a witness of this scene, K..., of Papaïston village, withholding the exact date and place.

"It was at the time of the clearings, people were in the farming habitations and the village was almost deserted. I was going fishing with P..., of Loka. We had moored our boat and were walking at the edge of the water when our attention was attracted by a nauseous odor which came from an unoccupied house. There we found the cadaver of a woman, E..., dead for two or three days. She had tried to break into the house by raising the roof, but she had remained wedged between two beams and smothered to death. Since she knew the house to be empty, she could not have had any other intention than to lodge an evil spell; after disengaging the body in the presence of witnesses, we went to inform the grand man who commanded, the motive seeming to be clear, that the yorka be interrogated on the spot without making a coffin.

789 "Before a council composed of half a dozen men and two village heads, the interrogation began; the dead woman was carried in an old boat bottom; at times I myself served as bearer. Pressed with questions, she confessed that she had wisi (1) and that she had been killed by Odun. The case was clear. We were ordered to transport the body to the place reserved for cursed people, downstream from Boni country. When we arrived there the body was again borne on the heads of two men to ask it to choose the spot where it wanted to be abandoned. The dead woman drew us far into the forest, wandered a moment, then stopped. We abandoned her on the

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1. They say commonly "to have wisi," as they say "to have an ɔbia," "to have a remedy."

/245 cont./

754 766 ground, after scattering the cloths which were covering her, and left without carrying out any rite.

"Next we went to Boniville, the grand man invoked Odun on our behalf, stating that we had only followed his laws and that he had to protect the performers of the job against any distressing consequence."

754 181 178 Development of sorcery. Since 1957 Boni country has been passing through a crisis; /246/ fear of sorcery is poisoning village life, while in 1948-50 it was a preoccupation of secondary importance.

[598] That is due to the fact that the rapid growing rich of part of the Boni aggravates jealousies and suspicions. Moreover, these affairs tend to appear in series. Since the case related above (1958), in which a woman, N...., was convicted of having paid a Creole quimboiseur to make the grand man die, an affair which strongly impressed the Boni, they tend to see wisi in all misfortunes that occur.

[169] In November, 1958 the death of a little girl of 12 of Kotika village was attributed to her uncle Mbomaolo, who had recently emigrated to Surinam and settled in a Creole village. [782] It is believed that he "committed himself," that is, that he sold his soul to the devil (1), which necessitates sacrificing one

[776] 1. This notion, which plays such a large role in West Indian beliefs, has no equivalent among the Refugee Blacks. There is no word in the Boni language for translating the term "committed." They translate thus: a e suku didibi, he seeks the devil. The Boni do not have a clear image of the devil, and this notion remains, in fact, foreign to their beliefs.

754 */246 cont./*
181 of his near relatives, his sister's children being regarded as
178 the victims most pleasing to the demon.

● [782] Although in former times one to two out of ten deaths were attributed to *wisi*, in 1957 and 1958 out of 14 adult deaths of which we could obtain the explanation, there were:

[784] --Four *wisimã* killed by Odun, including two women of over 85 who during their lifetime had never been the object of unfavorable notice;

[76] --One death by the action of a *wisimã*,

or a total of more than a third of the deaths; out of the nine others, two were looked upon as natural deaths (dead of old age), seven were attributed to the *kunu*.

754 *The Refugee Blacks and Creole magic.* Some of them go to
648 get from the *lukumã* what their own social morals forbid: vengeance or success acquired at the expense of other people. They have uttered an oath that prohibits the practice of *wisi*: for most of them it is clear that if they paid a *piayeur* /magician, sorcerer/ to harm someone, it would be the same as if they performed the sorcery themselves. But others make a mental reservation on this point.

754 In 1951, G...., of the Kotika *lo*, then about 20 years old,
755 felt ill while staying at Saint Laurent. He went to find a
648 Creole *maltif* (clairvoyant) who presented him with a mirror, announcing to him that he was going to see in it the face of the one who had *piayé* /bewitched, cast a spell on/ him. G... saw nothing in the mirror. The *maltif* was not upset at this and revealed to him that the *piayeur* must be someone in his wife's family. G... then recalled a dispute he had had some time previously with one of his wife's brothers and let himself be convinced: since that day he has not gotten along with his brother-in-law.

/247 cont./

688 689 attenuated form of wisi; in serious cases the grand man may inflict a severe punishment on the guilty ones.

789 *ɔbia.* The Refugee Blacks use the word *ɔbia* (1) to designate

192 789 754 1. The term *ɔbia* is used by the Refugee Blacks when they are speaking to outsiders, to designate positive magic, but in reality this term has a very different meaning in their language. It designates any kind of magic action, negative as well as positive; likewise the term *ɔbiamɛ* has the sense of sorcerer as well as that of holder of a remedy.

192 The Boni among themselves use the word *deesi,* remedy, instead of *ɔbia.* They do not use the word *deesimɛ* in place of *ɔbiamɛ.* It is said, for example, of a man who knows the rites of a cult of possession "*A sabi Papa gadu sani*" (he knows the things of *Papa gadu*).

• [989] The term *gadumɛ* designates one who is possessed of a god, and not one who knows how to bring on possession.

104 789 114 In the rest of this work we shall continue, nevertheless, to use the terms *ɔbia* and *ɔbiamɛ* to designate positive magic, in order to facilitate collation with the English- and Dutch-language authors who have used it in this sense.

/247 cont./

789 the object to which is attached a magic force, as well as that
force itself. But there is no confusion in their minds; the object
[195] is only a simple support, it is nothing by itself. The traveler
who sees them prepare an infusion of leaves for a sick person
may be tempted to believe that they attach to this leaf the
power of acting against a certain disease; that would be an
error, they attach to these leaves and to the white clay, pemba,
the power of holding, /248/ of condensing the vital force which
emanated from a certain god. It is the god which "makes
ɔbia," and not men; men do nothing but collect this energy
and apply it.

755 The Boni distinguish two categories of magic remedies:
787 --Those which come from a god through the medium of
a possessed person. The god must be consulted each time, and the remedy it gives is effective only for the asker alone, and for a limited time; it can act only when the god has been paid, usually in the form of drink or piece of cloth; in principle nothing is owed to the possessed person (they admit that he benefits by the payment made to the god), but the custom is to give him a bottle of tafia.

Consultation of a possessed person is in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks the normal mechanism by which the ɔbia descends from the god to men.

755 Certain Ampuku gods might give remedies effective for
776 a particular disease and for any asker, remedies which could be transmitted from one man to another. Unfortunately we could not obtain exact information about this.

755 --Those whose origin is unknown, and which have been
756 transmitted from one man to another for a very long time. It is believed that these are remedies which were found empirically by a man in days past; this is the case with many remedies specific for this or that disease.

In such a case payment is made to the possessor of the remedy and to him alone.

/249 cont./

751 Principal ɔbia. The Kumɛnti bui, bracelet of Kumɛnti, which is not to be confused with the man nɛŋge ɔbia, is materialized by a bracelet of fibers not worn on the arm but shut up in one's small trunk. It is a polyvalent ɔbia which insures at the same time [789] the protection of its owner against the machete and the gun, his material prosperity and his moral security, for it furnishes him with a very highly esteemed procedure of divination.

751 789 This ɔbia must be prepared each time on the orders of a Kumɛnti and in its presence in the body of a possessed person. It is the Kumɛnti which designates the leaves to go and get and the processing to make them undergo; according to the information which we have been able to get, this consists of plunging into the infusion of leaves first a machete, then an axe, both red hot, while the postulant recites formulas intended to fix in the ɔbia the power he desires (that the machete may not cut me, that I become rich, etc.).

751 The man nɛŋge ɔbia, exclusively intended for protection against the machete and gun, is materialized by a crudely fashioned iron ring clasping the arm a little below the shoulder (1).

> 1. The fact of wearing an iron ring on the arm does not necessarily correspond with possession of this ɔbia. In general, commoner ɔbia intended to protect from leprosy are concerned.

This ɔbia must not be confused with the ɔbia Kumɛnti. Obtaining possession by a Kumɛnti and the man nɛŋge obia /sic/ are two different things, corresponding to different rites.

/249 cont./

751 Possession by a Kumɛnti gives, they say, invulnerability
[787] during the time of the trance, but in his ordinary state the
individual remains vulnerable (they say only that in case of
danger the gita "rises" immediately).

Someone who has a man nɛŋga ɔbia has no trances of possession, but they state that he is permanently invulnerable (except for breaking of the kina). In order to obtain this ɔbia one must have himself "washed" for a very long time by an elder who knows the leaves in question. He delivers them already crushed so that no one may be able to know this secret outside of the son or nephew to whom he bequeaths it.

It is necessary to continue to be washed four times a year for 15 days each time, to keep up the force of the ɔbia.

[515] During these 15 days one bathes three times a day, in
secret (in principle nobody knows that you have this ɔbia).
[834] During these periods one must have no relation with a woman,
even to talk to her.

They state that someone who has a man nɛŋge ɔbia can be struck by blows of a machete and even receive a gunshot with impunity.

[173] They believe that this ɔbia, in the past called man feti
ɔbia, was obtained by the ancestors at the time of the wars
against the whites; still today it inspires an unshakeable con-
[164] fidence. /250/ In October, 1952 we saw M..., a man of 45
with great good sense, make a deep gash in his leg while
[752] cutting a liana, in spite of his ɔbia. Doubt did not cross his
mind for a second: he told us that certainly he had unknowingly
eaten something contrary to the kina of the ɔbia. Since we
were working near some villages, he went immediately to find
the master of the remedy to have the power restored. For
nothing in the world would he have left for a long round of work
in the bush with the feeling that he was at the mercy of an
accident.

/250 cont./

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396 There exist special *ɔbia* for the building of boats. The opening of the hull in the fire, a delicate operation, sometimes fails. To insure its success everyone possesses a personal recipe inherited from his father or uncle. It does not call by name and directly upon the action of a god; the Boni do not have a clear idea about the origin or the nature of these rites. It is a matter of a maceration of two or three kinds of leaves, generally belonging to the secondary flora which surrounds the villages, and they vary from one man to another. One pours this maceration over the overturned boat before the burning is begun, while saying: "The boat must not split, it must open well."

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[673] The laws of Odun forbid the use of charms aimed at forcing the love of a woman one desires; that would infringe on a person's freedom, therefore *wisi*. It is very /251/ possible however that certain people go to get charms of this kind from Creole magicians. But they take for granted, on the other hand, the *ɔbia* believed to permit men who have little success with women to have more in the future.

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789 There does not seem to be any hierarchy of *ɔbia* nor is one category of *ɔbia* believed to be stronger by nature than another; in fact, the Refugee Blacks are seen to go readily to ask one divinity for an *ɔbia* in order to protect themselves from another. Here is an example:

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[648] In 1951 the administration had a systematic cleaning of the Petit Inini River begun, in order to rid its course of innumerable pieces of fallen wood which were making the use of motors on boats difficult. A team of Boni were employed in

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[787] this work under the direction of a Creole foreman. While the work was being done, a *Papa gadu* "came into the head" of an old woman named M... of the Awara Bakka *lo*. It revealed that it was opposed to this work, for it lived in exactly this

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776 place and the noise of the motors bothered it. Upon their return to Boni country, the men charged with this work learned the

/255 cont./

784 262 A... of the Dju lo, about 28 years old in 1958, must observe six kina:

--The cayman and the jaguar as bwasi kina.

--The otter (yundu) as akka kina. /256/

These three kina have been imposed on him since his first years, but the meaning of them was explained to him only later on.

751 --The eel (mɛnsi) was imposed on him as a kina by his father when the latter gave him a man nɛŋge ɔbia, ɔbia of protection against machete or gun, materialized by an iron bracelet.

841 834 To this ɔbia is attached another kina. A... must not speak to a woman having her menstrual period.

751 787 --Finally, the crab (kaabu), kina attached to an ɔbia of which the man concerned only spoke with reticence, probably a Kumɛnti bui (bracelet of Kumɛnti, instrument of divination).

A... has no gadu kina in the strict sense of the term.

There exists no food kina common to all the Boni; the cayman is generally forbidden to them as bwasi kina, associated with another animal; but this is not absolute; we know at least one Boni who has not received this kina.

If someone has broken a kina inadvertently, he can have himself cleansed of this offense by ɔbiaman. But if he broke it wilfully, he cannot escape the punishment attached to the offense.

845 828 Beliefs about twins. They have the idea that twins and children who follow twins are of a nature different from other men, participating in a divine principle.

755 Twins cannot live (since they do not belong to ordinary humanity) if they are not treated with a special remedy known only to certain lineages especially rich in twins.

845 782 751 /257/

This worship is celebrated each time there is occasion to protect newborn babies. They are washed with a certain decoction of leaves.

845 535 751 Every four or five years on the average a big dance takes place, then the father and mother of twins and the twins themselves are washed in order to maintain their powers and keep them in good health.

[784] [753] If these dances are not held, dead twins will show their anger by making living twins and parents of twins sick.

845 613 778 Lineages that do not have twins do not practice these rites. If twins are born to them, they will apply at the place of worship of another lineage.

Papalston and Lapé have this cult particularly highly developed.

842 776 *Tɔne pikin*. It is assumed that a woman may be made pregnant by a river god, either a *Papa gadu* snake god or by the *Wata Iŋgi*, which look like Indians. Children thus conceived are called *tɔde pikin*.

A...., of Papalston, had cut a clearing opposite a remarkable white rock called *Weti stɔ̃*, where she used to moor her boat. She had not had any children for several years and she became pregnant. When her daughter was born a possessed person revealed that she was born of a *Papa gadu* snake god which lived there: since then her parents /relatives/ go regularly to this rock to make offerings. [787] [778] [782]

About 1910 Alama (Kormotibo) had followed her husband to a shipyard on the lower river; one day while walking in the forest she met an Indian having the appearance of a Galibi Indian, who was carrying a newborn baby. She stopped and admired the baby. The Indian said to her: "Do you wish to raise him?" She acquiesced. He said: "We shall see each other again"; then he went away so quickly that she had the impression that he had disappeared on the spot.

241 776 (532) (831) (778) (243) (782) /259 cont./
Cult of Mama gɔ̃. Mama gɔ̃, mother of the earth, is represented by a crude statue of white clay provided with enormous breasts, symbol of fecundity, which can be seen in a little hut situated on the open place of Boniville village. Each year, when the time for cutting the clearings approaches, the grand man, surrounded by many other people, prays to the god to grant fertility to the plantings. If rain does not fall, an offering of water and tafia is made and the statue is sprinkled.

811 The Boni do not appear to associate the idea of women's fecundity with that of the fertility of the soil, and we have not heard anyone say that the grand man prays on this subject.

241 776 Neither do they appear to have a very clear idea about the relationships of this worship with that of the gɔ̃ gadu, local gods of the soil.

796 535 787 Every three years a great possession dance takes place in Boniville on January 1, /260/ in which the Papa gadu gods dance in front of the sanctuary of Mama gɔ̃. We have not been able to obtain specific information on the meaning of this rite.

241 776 (784) Cult of the gɔ̃ gadu. It is assumed that every portion of land is under the sway of a local god, gɔ̃ gadu. Its power is limited only by the fertility of the soil, and he who neglects its worship cannot be attacked in his person or in his goods, but only punished by a poor harvest.

What is the nature of these gods, what is their place in the cosmogony? These are questions which not one of our informants had ever asked himself. In their minds, gɔ̃ gadu has a de facto existence, and is rendered de facto worship. This worship consists essentially of:

(782) --Offerings made at the moment of planting;

(527) --The observance of a local day of rest, kina dɛ, corresponding to the god's day of rest.

/262 cont./

824 778 door; it was a particularly feared kɔ̃ndu that no thief would have dared to remove.

825 778 [776] --The Kɔ̃ntamasu are the divinities, especially maleficent and hostile to men, who live in the termitaries (these are termites proper, who make their nest in the earth, and not wood lice, much more common). There is one to each termitary.

[789] After a meticulous examination of the soil of the clearing, one marks all the termitaries /263/ and sprinkles each of them with a preparation containing leaves, pink clay kukusa, and manioc juice. One adjures the genie to go away, no matter where.

● [789] [784] [782] It happens that in spite of all the precautions taken a termitary is forgotten. Then, several days later, one will have the consternation of seeing the Kɔ̃ntamasu reveal itself in someone of the lineage; it announces that it is going to exercise its kunu (curse). It is temporarily appeased by offerings of tafia, various drinks, red cloth.

776 198 787 The Kɔ̃ntamasu call themselves the Akɔlo. Through the mouth of their bearers they speak a language nobody understands. However, when they wish to be understood by those present they speak Kumɛnti.

755 784 Observation in Boniville, January, 1957:

A...., boatman of the border-fixing mission, asks for three days off. His wife, Masauman, has been ill for several days; divination (in this particular case the gita of a female relative in his lineage) showed that it was the doing of a Kɔ̃ntamasu injured in the burning of the clearing which he himself, A...., cut for his wife in October. The Kɔ̃ntamasu has not yet manifested itself directly, but a kunu threatens; to appease it he must put in action the remedy known only

000 to M.... an old man of Asisi. He will go to the spot, following

765 782 /263 cont./ He will go to the spot, following at a good distance M...., bearer of the remedy, with which he will sprinkle the surface of the clearing, and of offering objects. When the offering has been made, they will wait some time to see whether Masauman is better and if she is, they will deem the god appeased.

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The Yaii Festival

[805] The Refugee Blacks, who do not count the days that elapse, contenting themselves with lunations in order to follow the course of the year, make inquiries from Europeans and Creoles to set the time for the Yaii festival which marks the new year. Everyone accumulates provisions, especially tortoise meat, varied drinks, and many firecrackers.

On the evening of December 31 each one dances in his own village.

The festival lasts all night, tafia gushes forth, firecrackers go off everywhere.

[787] At the end of the night several gods "rise" in the heads of their bearers, at least of those who are not completely drunk.

[535] During the day dances resume intermittently in the order awasa, sɔŋgiɛ, susa. It is customary for the people of one lineage to go to dance in the village of another, then they [574] invite them back. People make many individual visits. Some have set up in front of their hut a sort of small buffet on which they have arranged about ten glasses, five to six liters of tafia, four or five bottles of beer, lemonade, and syrup.

Observation in Boniville, January 1, 1958:

The grand man, who scarcely leaves his habitation downstream from Boniville any more, did not /264/ put himself out. He delegated his functions to Lébiman and Fintiman, men about 60 years old, belonging to the fraction of the Kotika and Dju lineages residing in Boniville.

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628 It seems that in these relations, both bring more patience and tolerance to bear than toward the people of their own group. It is excessively rare to see disputes arise between Indians and Boni, when there sometimes are some within each group.

186 The feelings which the Boni have toward the Indians are complex: they feel superior in physical strength, effectiveness, and organization; they make fun of the Indians' puerile eagerness for beads and jewelry, of the begging attitude of certain
829 ones among them. But they admire them for their cleverness, their intimate knowledge of the forest, and fear them for the supernatural powers they attribute to them. Sure of themselves, fearing nothing from the bush, never getting lost, unrivalled hunters and fishermen, the Indians appear to them to be endowed with unique faculties which other men do not possess. We have happened to hear in camp reflections such as this: "It is going to rain, the Indians are making shacks."

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152 The Boni feel an intense fear of Indian magic. Not one of them would dare to seriously displease an Indian, and even if he feels he has been wronged, in most cases he will not dare complain (1).

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829 1. In the search for the magic causes of death, it happens that divination may incriminate the action of an Indian medicine man. In such a case the legal action of the Boni is extinguished, for the principle is that the Indian medicine man does not hurt anyone without a reason. It is considered that the deceased must have gravely injured him and that he deserved his fate.

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114 Here desirous of remaining on the plane of strict scientific objectivity, we shall avoid entering the discussion of the benefit springing from this action, which, moreover, would necessitate a long development. We shall limit ourselves to showing that it appears to us to be doomed to failure.

871 177 --The experiment of schooling has been made for more than 30 years among the Boni in the village of Kotika. Half a dozen children, doing well in their studies, left for Surinam and broke with their native group. In the others, the teaching received left only faint traces. As a matter of fact, there is no room in a normal intelligence to receive at the same time the mass of technical knowledge necessary for holding one's own in the society of the Refugee Blacks and ordinary school instruction. [829] One necessarily drives out the other; now the Boni are extremely fond of their free life on the great river, which assures them very satisfactory material conditions of living.

797 177 184 --Evangelization has been carried on with perseverance for more than 200 years with the Refugee Blacks of Surinam. It has not given appreciable results. It has been the same in French Guiana with the action carried on with the Saramaka working /299/ near the communes of the coast (1), and more recently with the Boni of the Upper Maroni.

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[648] 1. The Saramaka not only have no tendency to be converted, but they exert a significant influence on the population of the communes. [756] On the Oyapok the Saramaka healer has numerous clients, [787] and in spite of the clergy's interdiction, many women go to the possession dances of the Papa gado serpent gods.

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791 The Boni, as we have shown, do not feel that they are pagans. They think they worship the same god as the Christians, in a different way but just as valid; they feel that their moral principles are not inferior to those of the Christians, that they are expressed in practice by the same prescriptions and are in fact better obeyed(2).

[828] 2. We report here faithfully the point of view of those concerned without making any judgment of its worth; let us recall that their principles of living do not assume any moral conscience in the individual and rest entirely upon the fear of material punishments in the present life. But even this base gives them great practical effectiveness.

829 Only in their conception of their kinship and the family, in the absence of family life based on the indissolubly united couple, do they recognize that they live under another law. But they do not fail to notice that the populations of the Guianas who profess Christianity hardly put it into practice in their family life: the stability of marriages is appreciably greater among the Refugee Blacks.

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828 As for the cults of possession, the Boni feel that they worship de facto entities whose existence appears as tangible to them as light or weight to us. These ideas are bound up with a characteristic way of perceiving, touching deep zones of the mind which reasoning does not reach (3).

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787 3. Actually, it is observed in Black Africa that where cults

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> of possession exist, the populations are particularly impermeable to Christian influence. Apparently destroyed, these cults soon reappear in another form, sometimes in Christian guise (possession by the saints).

177 562 Let us add that one of the great strengths of the custom of the Refugee Blacks is the privileged position it gives to the woman. Women, shielded from the direct influence of Europeans and Creoles, and besides practically inaccessible to all reasoning, are hostile to changes which would infringe on their privileges. Now it is they, in fact, who have the education of the children in their hands.

114 177 Thus it does not appear possible to "assimilate" these populations by destroying their original culture. The attempts inspired by fanaticism for civilizing will have as their only result its impoverishment, pushing the Refugee Blacks to dissimulate their beliefs, to abandon their art, costume, songs, and dances, all that makes up their joy in living. But the social structure based on the fear of ancestors and gods could be destroyed only by violence. We may hope that nobody thinks of coming to that.

114 As for us who have lived a long time in the midst of the Refugee Blacks, we feel a deep esteem for them. By their historic past, the originality of the customs they have developed, the good relations they have been able to create with the other populations, they have proved their creative abilities; they deserve to be allowed to evolve in their own way. /blank page/